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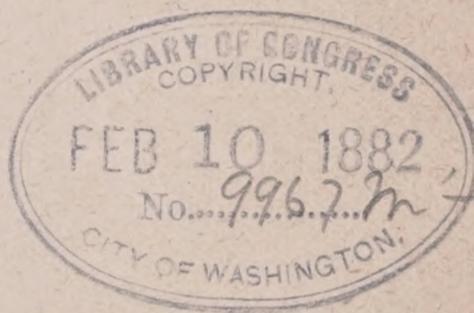
Along the Juniata.

See page 9.

BYRNE RANSOM'S BUILDING.

✓
BY HILES C. PARDOE.
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THREE ILLUSTRATIONS.



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INSCRIPTION.

RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED TO MY DEAR CHILDREN,
WITH THE BELIEF THAT THE PRINCIPLES OF
HONOR, TRUTH, AND PURITY DELINE-
ATED IN THESE SIMPLE PAGES
WILL BE EXEMPLIFIED
IN THEIR LIVES.

THE AUTHOR.

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“Not to-morrow, but to-day.”

BYRNE RANSOM'S BUILDING.

CHAPTER I.

SECURING THE GROUND.

IT was a lazy afternoon in the autumn of 1808. Three wide-awake boys in their teens had been strolling the livelong day about the fields and woods at the head-waters of the "blue Juniata." * Surfeited with boating and fishing, they sat down to rest under an old elm in "Dell Delight."

Beyond them, to the west, stretched the historic Alleghanies, with numerous shaggy peaks shooting heavenward in acknowledged sublimity. At their feet flowed the gentle river, upon whose bosom, till now of late, had scudded the birchen canoes of the red man, and which had echoed with the songs of the wild but beautiful Alfarata. The "Dell" itself was a thing of beauty—a very workshop of unseen artists.

* See Frontispiece.

The maple and ash, the hickory and walnut, the elm and dogwood, were dressed in their brightest tints. Bridgeton, just across the river, with its picturesque background, and the twin rock-towers of Chimney Ridge looking down upon it in the full sunlight, was the seat of justice of H. County. It was also the home of the boy truants. With a passion for thrilling adventures, the lads had been beguiling the hour with numerous Indian stories which they had heard from others. Perhaps the most interesting one of all was told by Sylvester Mason, about the sacking and burning of Bridgeton itself, shortly after it was laid out.

It seems that a remnant of the Algonquins, which had been driven back from Central New York by the Dutch of the Manhattan Colony, had swept across the country near to Fort Pitt, and had ravaged the new settlements in Western Pennsylvania. For days they had hung about Bridgeton, "like lightning upon the edge of clouds," and at midnight of a certain Christmas had swooped down upon the illy-protected villagers. Many were slain in their beds; others fled to the mountain fastnesses. The latter returned in a fortnight—having,

in the meantime, suffered every thing except death—only to find their homes in ashes, and the charred remains of their neighbors and friends. Not wholly discouraged, however, they commenced the work of rebuilding the town. A company of Scotch-Irish from the eastern part of the State, on their way westward, were induced to settle at Bridgeton and in its adjacent neighborhood. The town soon recovered from its violent shock, and, lying upon the highway from the sea-board to the West, soon took rank among the most sprightly of the colonial towns.

The Indian stories over, the boys threw themselves upon the grass and slept.

Byrne Ransom was now in his sixteenth year. Physically he was well developed. His head was large and rather finely ordered, his complexion dark, hair black, and a pair of keen eyes danced underneath heavily shaded brows. He was somewhat awkward in appearance, with loose morals, full of self-assurance, but withal a clever fellow among his numerous and admiring associates. He was an orphan. His father—an emigrant from the southern part of France—had died when he was but ten years of age. The grave of his mother was yet fresh.

The grief which smote his young heart, as he clung to the coffin of his father when strong men bore it away, or which overtook him as he looked down into the awful grave of his mother, must remain forever unwritten.

George Harding and Sylvester Mason were now undoing the works of parental influence and authority. Reared, as they had been, in the presence of dram-drinking and dram-selling, the desecration of the Sabbath, gambling, and other vices, what wonder that their lives were steeped in guilt! With Byrne it had been different. His early surroundings had been more wholesome. His father's virtues had often been the subject of conversation at home, and his example held forth as worthy of imitation. The loves and sympathies and prayers of his mother were ever floating in his memory, and served in some measure to hold his evil tendencies in check. But of late he was changed. He had fallen into many evil habits. Strong drink was getting the mastery of his appetite. His trunk always contained two or three indecent books. He could handle the dice-box right skillfully, and sweep the stakes at the card-table with great readiness. He neglected the house of God, and laughed

at the idea of becoming religious. Whether taken as to his own habits and theories, or in his associations, he was a subject of gloomy prophecies.

We left the boys asleep under the elm. Byrne had a remarkable dream. He thought he was an old man. His hair was like the driven snow, his ears sullen, his eyes darkened, his step feeble, and he leaned upon a staff. His friends had deserted him, his property had been sold for debts incurred through the use of intoxicating drinks, disease had fastened itself upon him, and the evil days had fully come. Wasted years stared back upon him with no gentle reproaches; golden opportunities lay at his feet like a cast-off harp with broken strings; his conscience smote him as with a two-edged sword, while every thought bespoke his infidelity to righteousness and truth. Before him was the solemn judgment and the book of destiny. Memory and judgment and imagination were beginning to haunt his desolate spirit already, like so many ghosts of darkness. Eternity was to reveal all, and in unmeasured numbers.

The overwhelming force of his apprehension was so violent as to waken him from his sleep.

Behold it was a dream! The sun was melting away beyond the mountains, and the damps of the evening were settling down upon the "Dell." Byrne roused his companions, and all hurried homeward. The dream was unmentioned. Its unhappy outlines and dreadful destinies, however, had filled his soul with unutterable alarm.

Since the death of his parents Byrne and an only sister had been living with an uncle.

Thomas Ransom was a greedy, ambitious, and intemperate man. His selfishness knew no limit, and as for generous impulses, they found no welcome in his heart. The dying message of his brother, "that he should befriend his two children," was being complied with in that semi-indifferent manner in which many good deeds are done, but which really extracts all of the nectar out of the doing. The home of Mr. Ransom was a cold spot. Love, patience, and forbearance—heavenly exotics—could not live in such a clime. There were fuss and energy and fullness, but the absence of prayer and thankfulness and consecration which had always characterized the home of Nathaniel Ransom. It was nearly dark when Byrne reached his uncle's house,

and in a very self-complacent way he fell to doing his chores.

"You villain, you! Where have you been all day?" said Mr. Ransom, as he came out of the barn-yard in a rage.

"At school, sir."

"At school, sir! Will you tell me such a barefaced lie as that?" and with an oath and a blow he sent him reeling to the ground.

"Get up there now," he bellowed, "and if I hear another word out of you for a week I'll thrash you within an inch of your life."

Thomas Ransom was the last man to teach morals. His example was enough to break down any precept leading to truth or virtue which he might strive to inculcate. Well did Byrne Ransom know this, and so violence had made but little impression upon him. Having finished his evening's work, he slunk away to his room without his supper, like a whipped spaniel.

He little knew what a night was before him. Three several thoughts were chasing each other through his brain like unbridled steeds. The first was that of his early childhood and its precious associations; the second, his numerous sins; and the third, his singular dream.

It seemed to him as if truth and honor and purity had girded themselves with strength, and had determined to have the mastery of his affections. But his "will" stubbornly and sternly resisted their approach. Then he reasoned with himself and said, "Shall the tender influences which have been about me from my cradle be lost now in my youth? Shall I forget—in my sins—the prayers which have been sent up to God for me, and not try and have them answered? Shall I shut myself out of the society of my dear father and mother in that other world?" He could not brook the results of wrong-doing. He tossed about in bed, hour after hour, in great mental distress. His pillow was wet with tears. At last he rose from his bed, and, taking down from a shelf a little pocket Bible, he knelt down and said:

"I, Byrne Ransom, believing that no life can be complete without the daily help of God, and anxious to go back upon all that is sinful in my own life, do here and now surrender myself to Jesus Christ, as my all-sufficient Saviour from sin, and do plight to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost the effort of my life-long hours."

He kissed the book, and was free. A heavenly calm swept over his moral feelings, harmonizing most beautifully with the change that had come over the face of nature by the ushering in of the golden sunlight. It was the first great victory over sense and self. The second was like unto it, namely, the fixed resolution to abandon his evil associates.

Farmer Ransom heard the confession and the story of reform with much indifference, if not skepticism. He gave him no credit and no encouragement.

Upon the outskirts of the village there lived a character who became a strong factor in strengthening and maturing the principles embodied in that night-covenant with truth. He was familiarly known as Old Ben. His skin was black, but his soul was as transparent as a sunbeam. He was small of stature, somewhat bent, had a low forehead, only one good eye, and plenty of iron-gray hair upon his head and chin. He stayed in a little old tumble-down cabin at the fork of the road leading respectively from Bridgeton to Karson and Blackmere. He had been brought from Jamaica in one of the vessels of the French Colony, which was located in Northern Florida,

under the management of Coligny. His Southern master had had in his employ a witty old Irishman, who had become very much attached to Ben. Ben had added to his own peculiar dialect many of the Irishisms of his friend, Pat O'Daugherty. These would often crop out in his intercourse with others.

Byrne's first acquaintance with him was had at "Hart's Log Meeting-house," some ten miles down the valley, where they had both gone to attend a religious meeting. It was Sunday morning, and the regular preaching services were preceded by an old-fashioned experience-meeting. Among the first to speak was the old black brother from Bridgeton. His remarks were rather desultory at first, and were likely to weary the patience of others, but he broke out at last with great emphasis:

"My dear bredern, I'se come a long distance to dis yer meetin'. I didn't come for to git any more 'ligion, but to git out on de great portico ob glory, and rejice and praise God;" and in an instant he was taking to himself a good old plantation hallelujah shout. The congregation was not disturbed by his actions, as they knew him to be sincere, and, although extremely ignorant, yet really devout.

Byrne, knowing him to be from Bridgeton, had yet never been apprised of his being a professor of religion. On the way home Ben gave him a description of his flight into the mountains of the old Keystone State.

“Yer see, I was Massar Ludlow’s coachman for years. It was on de Good Friday ob de Lor’ dat dis niggah drove de missus and de young ladies to de ole stone meetin’-house, to heah Pa’son Jones preach de gospil. Ah, don’t I ’member dat day! De pa’son had for his subjec’ de jub’lee, de yeah ob jub’lee. Honey! I ’member it jest as if ’twar yesterday. I sat out on de steps at de front door, lis’en’ mid all my ears. He sed Christ died to make men free. Free? sed I. O, he’s prèachin’ to dem white folk, not to me. Still, I heerd him say, Christ died to make men free. He whom the truf makes free, am free indeed. I got new light. G’wine home I was a preachin’ to myself dat sarmon ober agin. Dat freedom mus’ mean de right ob way wid oneself—to pray, to work, to lub, to hab one’s own wife, to hab one’s own home, to hab one’s own chil’en. I tell yer, honey, de bells ob de jub’lee kep a mighty ringin’ in dese ole ears, an’ I prayed de good Lor’ to help dis ole niggah jus’ dis one

time, an' he did, all dat awful way from de cotton States to ole Pennsylvany"—here he sat down by the roadside, and broke out into violent shouting, "Glory be to Massar Jesus! he brot me all de way!"

The slave-holding parson had preached wiser than he knew. His black auditor had interpreted his words quite literally, and, converting his new ideas into resolves, and these in turn into efforts, old Neb Ludlow waked one morning with one less slave to whip, and God got one more free and simple-hearted worker for his vineyard.

Ben was living alone now. His family had been so separated by the auctioneer that it was impossible for him to hear from them, much less to secure their freedom. He often expressed himself, though, as "waitin' for dat great gittin'-up mornin', when Massar Jesus would help him find de lost ones."

Byrne Ransom spent many evenings in old Ben's quiet cabin. He became an apt and ready pupil; and although the lips which uttered the lessons were scarcely able to spell out the words of eternal life, the Holy Spirit had endowed them with power. Here he learned that simplicity and purity were forces

in character, which might not be gainsaid nor resisted; that integrity of purpose and strict adherence to truth were the only safe guarantees to a successful life. It was here that he found out the method of resisting the force of home associations, which were all too trying. It was here that those strong lights were kindled, which burned on and still on in the heart and experience of that mountain youth.

“The conditions of moral wealth are choice and effort.”

CHAPTER II.

UNCERTAIN MEASURES.

“The conditions of moral wealth are choice and effort.”

THE monotony of Bridgeton life was broken one day by the stirring notes of martial music. A recruiting officer was stopping at the mountain inn, enlisting soldiers for the war between Great Britain and the United States in 1812. The annals of the Colonies were remarkable for the courage displayed by the younger troops during the Revolution, and Byrne's heart had been thrilled time and again by the stories of Bunker Hill, Brandywine, Trenton, etc. The persuasions of Major White seemed irresistible, and, before they were aware of what they had done, a half dozen or more of youths were under the employ of the government. The company proper had been recruited in an adjoining county, and the names of Sylvester Mason, George Harding, Horace and James Cole, Thoburn Sears, and Byrne Ransom made up the quota. They were to be attached to the Third Regiment of

Pennsylvania Volunteers, and were to rendezvous at Philadelphia, prior to being sent to Sackett's Harbor, New York.

The war is well-known to have been brought on by certain acts of the British Parliament in relation to the rights of neutral nations upon the high seas. By this measure American commerce was seriously interfered with, which caused Congress to lay an embargo upon all American vessels. This soon brought on a declaration of war and open hostilities.

The Bridgeton boys knew but little about the origin of the war, neither had they cared. Their enlistment had been the result of a banter by one and another; but by the time they reached the regiment and were sworn into the service, they waked to the real significance of their act. The "Third" had been recruited from among a rough and uncouth class of people. The battle news from the northern frontier was very unfavorable to the American side, and the regiment was likely to be transferred to the naval service. Camp life had few attractions. It was a fatal school for morals. To be associated daily with men who had surrendered to every species of vice and yet remain untainted, was a work which demanded

the most careful forethought and the most diligent watching. The squad from Bridgeton were illy qualified to cope with such dangerous odds.

It was a strange infatuation, certainly, which caused young Ransom to commence soldiering. His tastes, his habits, his ambitions and desires, pointed directly opposite to such a life. The outlook was gloomy. Those bright principles of truth and virtue to which he had subscribed had hardly found a lodging-place in his heart until they were almost plucked up by the roots. What ridicule! What profanity! What sneers and bitter words! His religion was made the butt of daily sarcasm. Such were some of the cruel tests to which his faith and patience were put. The fires underneath that crucible burned strongly. The edge of that formidable weapon, satire, was whetted to perfect keenness.

The boys were compelled to acknowledge that Byrne was the making of a good soldier. He was as brave as the best of them; his submission to military discipline was equal to that of any, and as for integrity and moral virtue, they knew him to be greatly their superior. His home-thrusts at their sins were as barbed

arrows; his patient endurance of their persecutions as points of steel. Upon his seal he had cut the words of the great Captain, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." The voice of that Captain was ever ringing in his ears, for he had enlisted in another army. He had obtained a breastplate strong, had girded himself with a sword two-edged and trenchant, and bore a shield able to ward off the fiery darts of evil.

But once throughout the whole campaign was he ensnared. The trap had been laid for his feet, and in an evil hour, and while haunted by those fearful appetites which pursue a moderate drinker, he was caught. But the very men who decoyed him, when they saw him reeling to his tent under the influence of liquor, were pierced to the soul.

To himself the humiliation was deep. He was ashamed of his weakness. He upbraided himself for keeping such company, and resolved to come not again into the way of temptation.

Laura Ransom was four years younger than her brother—sprightly, handsome, good-natured. Many a romp had she with the Coles boys and others of the regiment when they were at home, and now in their absence she

sent them many tokens of her good-will in the shape of friendly letters or boxes of dainties. The boys all voted her a complete success, and wished her a genuine Boaz when once she would go a-gleaning with a double purpose. Her brother's letters were always warmly received and gratefully acknowledged. They revealed somewhat the nature of the kind of life they were leading.

“MY OWN DEAR LAURA: I take the first good chance offered for writing you. How much I miss your cheerful words and presence I will not say. Distance does not divide my love, nor danger lessen my anxiety for your welfare. You would not think that a soldier would get lonely, but he does. Thoughts of home and friends and privileges left behind crowd through the mind in rapid succession. I was thinking last night, when on picket-duty, how early you and I were thrown out upon the world to form our character and to shape our destiny. O, to be alone in this wide world! to feel never again the soft pressure of a mother's hand! to be denied the wise counsels of a father's love! Can we ever forget that gloomy day when auntie called us from our play and

told us that father was dying? Can we ever forget how desolate our house was when we came back from mother's funeral? O that I might have died and been buried too! But hush, my heart! God has kept us through all the weary way which we have traveled. He has lifted the clouds; he has sweetened our cup, and bids us go forward. We must not sit down in doubt, nor waste our golden moments in trying to build castles in the air—ours is a nobler aim. Laura, by those sweet dying words, repeated in common by our dear parents, "Live for Christ," let us act well our part.

As ever,

BYRNE."

"MY DARLING SISTER: Could you only know what pleasure your cheery letters give me you would write more frequently, and fill every page and line brimful. The boys always ask kindly for you whenever they learn that I have a letter from old Bridgeton. Dear old place! my heart often turns in that direction. Sackett's Harbor is a rusty old town. I am about tired of this life anyhow. We have been guarding a lot of British soldiers for the past few months. They were taken prisoners when the 'Macedonian' was captured by that gal-

lant officer, Commodore Decatur. Long may the 'stars and stripes' float on the breeze!

"It is altogether possible that we will remain here a considerable while, and that the greater part of the fighting will be done by the navy. In that department our government is greatly inferior to the enemy, but, withal, we are having some splendid victories.

"I was grieved to hear of uncle's financial troubles, and hope that he may survive the shock. I do not entertain the kindest recollections of him, but still I wish him well. But dear, kind auntie, give her my purest wishes. I shall never forget her care and attention to myself and my only sister.

"I trust that uncle may soon begin to think of the true riches, be a little forgetful of self, and show that tenderness for others' feelings which he always wants shown to himself. I do not have much sympathy for that notion, which is fast gaining ground among men, that money is the highest good. If these seeds of error, which are now being sown, do not produce a harvest in extravagance and dishonesty in American society I shall be greatly surprised.

"Your remark about Fred Green showing

you such special attention was great news. I know you always regarded him in the light of a friend. Now that he talks seriously of uniting fortunes, the matter deserves some thought. I ought hardly to advise you upon such an important subject. But you ask me about Fred. To be plain, Fred drinks liquor; he is not careful of the society he keeps, neither male or female, and there are no signs of reformation. He would not make a suitable companion. You may think this the advice of a sage or an old fogey, but I have seen so many instances of misplaced affection, disappointment, and divorce, that I have concluded that love need not be so blind as people make it, and that a person should use a little 'mother wit' about that question, as well as others. But enough of this for the present. Send us another box. Those chickens were rare things for us to have.

"As ever,

BYRNE."

"MY DEAR SISTER: What in the world has stopped your usual flow of spirits? Your last was wretchedly dull. Excuse me now; but Monema has proven false to you; she has turned Mary against you. The course of true

love never runs smooth, and I suspect that your information in regard to the matter is not correct. If you are certain that she intended to injure you, I think you are justifiable in breaking the friendship. But let not hope be driven from the field. To me life is putting on another face. I have been subjected of late to some severe trials. Our captain is very unscrupulous, and has a special dislike to some of the boys, myself among the number. I find it pleasant, though, to be under the guidance of the blessed book.

“The world formerly presented great charms for me. But I know it is deceitful. Its pleasures are only transitory and unsatisfying. Much that glitters is nothing more than brass—much that goes for friendship is but a cheat. A true friend is valuable to have. He can usually be detected, and a right estimate put upon him, by these marks: first, he should be willing to give another his due; second, not be moved by envy or jealousy; and, third, have the courage to stand up for one when he is slandered.

“In my short life I have found those to be the best friends who have been tried by the touchstone of the Gospel. There is a strange fascination about the Christ of the evangelists.

His words and spirit breathe a noble generosity, and those who are drawn together through him generally maintain a friendship which is pure and lasting.

“Sister, the days are escaping. What we need is the rest of faith. The people say we are orphans. That is a cold word, and we both know what it means. But are we orphans? Doesn't the kind Father above lead us, and does his promise not assure us that we shall never be forsaken? Surely such a Friend deserves our love, obedience, and constancy. O that our lives may become as fragrant as the pot of Jewish ointment broken upon the feet of the Saviour of men!

“Good-bye till we meet.

“As ever,

BYRNE.”

Such were some of the noble words written by this soldier-youth in these early times. There were sentiments couched in those letters worthy of an older pen. But stern experience had been his teacher, and the lessons had not been lost.

The sudden change from the exhilarating climate of Cental Pennsylvania to the malarial districts where they were now encamped was

a severe test to the health of the troops. Soon after their arrival in camp three of the Bridgeton boys were taken ill with typhoid fever. The physicians regarded the case of George Harding as serious from the beginning. During the second week of the disease it was intimated that he must die. This was a terrible shock to the feelings of the boys. George was a prodigy in vice. His chances for getting and doing good were about as favorable as those of most young men living in a community where the Gospel is regularly preached. The same door of escape had swung open to him as to others; but he had set his face as a flint against all the tender and gracious calls to truth from men and God.

Some had sought to restrain the violence of his passions and to save him from the corrupt associations of the street, but all had been in vain. Even the reformation of his old associate, Byrne Ransom, had made but little impression upon him. Hardly a voter, he was hardened in wrong-doing. Now his young life was fading out. If kind words or wishes or deeds of his comrades could have brought back the health-glow to his cheek, or calmed his fevered brow, then had he speedily recov-

ered ; for, with all their waywardness, they each possessed a kind disposition. But deeds of kindness could not stay the progress of the fever. The third week the crisis was reached. Delirium soon broke the power of conversation, and it was evident that the die was cast.

There were heart-burnings in that mess now, smittings of conscience, and promises of amendment. Especially did young Ransom chide himself for not pressing home upon George the necessity of being prepared for death. He had tested the value of experimental religion, and knew that it was the power and wisdom of God unto the salvation of the soul. But he had lacked positiveness. He had relied too much upon the silent influence of example to win others to the Saviour. He was too timid in speaking freely of his hopes and prospects for another world. Had he been more faithful to his trust it might have been different with George.

The death-bed scene was one of deep anguish. The young man labored under the notion, at times, that he was a criminal, that he had committed some dreadful act and was undergoing the process of trial at court.

He would describe the scene himself. He talked about the witnesses who were testifying against him. He whispered to his attorneys, who, he declared, were bending every effort to release him. Now he would burst forth in violent sobs at the remembrance of his aged mother, who, he thought, was present in the court-room, and now would repeat the sentence of the court or struggle to get rid of the officers of the law.

At other times he imagined himself in the gay and festive scenes of some drinking-saloon; he would laugh and chuckle as in some idle conversation, or rise up in bed and sweep his hand across the table by his side, as if gathering up the stakes of some well-played game of eucher. Hell itself seemed to be uncovered, and the infernal powers seemed moving earthward.

So died this brave young man. He deserved a better fate, but his fate was of his own making, and now no power in earth or heaven could unmake it. With tears and regrets the soldiers of Company C laid him in the grave. Two stones mark that quiet place.

The regiment was soon transferred from Sackett's Harbor and stationed at Greenbush.

The prisoners were removed thither, and, after the evacuation of Washington by the red-coats, were paroled. The war did not continue many months after this occurrence, and on the 20th of November, 1814, the troops were discharged.

“The basis of all excellence is truth.”

CHAPTER III.

FOUNDATION PRINCIPLES.

“The basis of all excellence is truth.”

LOST opportunities are seldom recovered. Fugitive moments have a strong self-will. And yet the past, as experience, may become the glad harbinger and dictator of successful well-doing.

Byrne Ransom had been squandering too much time. He had wasted golden chances for self-improvement. He had made many resolutions to secure a better education, but, somehow or other, he was always disappointed. He had no trade, no education, no fortune; and, worse than all, he had almost reached his majority.

But he resolved to be no longer the slave of an ignorant mind. He would roam, as others, at will in the fields of science and history, in mathematics and *belles-lettres*.

Naturally of a quick turn of mind, of ready utterance, and a good stock of common sense, which, after all, is the foundation of true great-

ness, he had caught up the rudiments of learning. His observation of men and things had also sharpened his intellect. Had some judicious and painstaking friend, some well-to-do Christian rusting out for the want of some opportunity to do good, only taken this young man in earlier years and shaped his thought and habits of study—inspired him with a love for books and helped him into a liberal training—the result would have been glorious. As it was, the wretched failure of somebody and the negligence of his own will, were sources of stern misgivings and unhappy retrospections. And yet there were scintillations of genius, flashes of wit, and evidences of power within him which needed only the hand of a master to bring them into the sphere of generous conquest.

But what of ways and means? His father had died poor. The sum total of money in the house at the death of his mother was fourteen dollars. From sheer necessity Thomas Ransom had given him a home. But as for furnishing means to give his nephew an education, that was an absurd proposition.

Byrne's army career, financially, had been a failure. His sister Laura was dressed so shab-

bily that he had shared with her the little money he had left when he was discharged. But, without a dollar in his pocket, he was, nevertheless, rich compared with some young men I wot of—very rich.

There are not wanting those in every community who live in great expectation of inheriting their father's money, who are very complacent with the fullness of their father's table, can curl with much grace the smoke of a high-priced cigar, and talk patronizingly of men and things. For them the "sociable," with its quiet programme of quadrille and polka and schottish, its champagne and wine and sundry refreshments, or the ribbons of a smart horse, or the manifold indulgences of a fashionable watering-place, are more than wisdom, wit, or religion.

The smooth stones from the brook, with which missiles Byrne hoped to pierce the helmet of Giant Poverty and lay him beneath his feet, were well-defined ideas, well-conceived plans, an unconquerable will, and unbounded faith in the Father above.

From Bridgeton to C., the seat of D. college, was about two hundred miles. A passage by the line of stages running thither would have

been an expensive luxury to Byrne under prosperous circumstances, but, in the present condition of his finances, a thing not to be dreamed of. He made the journey on foot. By noon of the first day he reached the termination of the great Pennsylvania canal, then constructing through the State, and spent the first night at the village of H. By daylight of the following day he was again upon the road, arriving at L. about nine o'clock in the evening. Thence he proceeded, by canal boat and by walking, for several days, until he reached his destination.

It was Saturday night when he trudged, footsore and weary, into the antiquated borough of C. There was but one person in the town with whom he was acquainted. That person was a maiden aunt, the oldest sister of his mother. In one of her visits to Bridgeton, when Byrne was a babe, she had said playfully to the mother, "You must train that boy for some useful profession, and if you send him to college at C. I will do my part by him." Byrne's mother had prayed that the line of her son's life might be in the direction of excellent scholarship and personal goodness.

But Miss Avery had become reduced in cir-

cumstances, and was now living in the suburbs of the town, making her living by washing for the students. She welcomed her sister's son, and offered him boarding at the merest trifle, and encouraged him to go forward in his endeavors.

The following day being Sabbath, he sought out the house of the Lord. A plain structure, substantially built, standing in an alley-place, was said to be the house where the students attended worship. The preacher of the morning was the Rev. Dr. C., one of the most eloquent men of his day. "Such a sermon was never preached in old H. County," said the stranger as he walked home. "If Uncle Tom could only have heard it how glad I should be! I must tell him all about it the very first time I write."

The first interview with President M'Knight of the college was had on Tuesday morning. The doctor spoke feelingly to him, seemed to enter into the spirit of his determinations, and said that a good, brave resolution would certainly win. He was accustomed to hearing such stories as Byrne's, and was glad if he might remove a thorn out of the way of weary feet, or lift a cloud which had gathered over

the spirit of the doubting. Fortune had thrown upon him most favoring smiles, and he sought to make others, less favored, to feel that his heart was beating in generous sympathy with theirs.

The session had already opened. The college was suffering temporarily from some financial embarrassment, and was not so well filled with students as it had been formerly. But additional arrivals during the week gave a more creditable showing, much to the satisfaction of the faculty.

It may not be well to follow young Ransom in the earlier work of preparation, to watch him wrestling with temptation to abandon his project; nor yet to dwell upon the necessity which drove him to do much drudgery about the building in order to make ends meet.

At last he was pronounced qualified to enter the first class in the course. It consisted of about eighteen or twenty boys, ranging from fourteen upward. Among the number was the youngest son of President M'Knight.

Ransom's room-mate was a Boston boy, by the name of Theodore Austin, who afterward became a leading man in Western politics. He was the son of a Unitarian minister, of

brilliant parts. Theodore had inherited much of his father's genius, and had been reared under widely different circumstances from his chum. He was a great lover of novels, enjoyed the clandestine eucher parties of the building, and defended with much emphasis the unorthodox opinions of his father. He was not destitute, however, of certain good impulses, which were ever cropping out in his association with his fellow-students — was a fluent talker, and a great wit. Notwithstanding the antagonisms of the two lives, the young men were strangely and strongly drawn together.

It was the day after they had returned from their summer vacation, prior to entering the Junior class. The two were seated upon the old stone steps in front of the college, looking down upon the crowds in the beautifully shaded campus.

"How did you spend your vacation, old fellow?" said Ransom.

"Grandly! grandly!" was the reply. "Our glee club was off on a water excursion to the Sicily Islands. It was the jolliest set of boys ever you saw, too. What we didn't have along with us don't belong to a voyage. What we

didn't enjoy in the shape of pleasure isn't for boys to enjoy. We chartered the vessel ourselves, and every man was his own master. Our meals were just superb, and our amusements just to our hand. We went to bed when we pleased, got up when we pleased, and fairly outgeneraled our own wits in devices for pleasure. You don't find many such parties as ours in a life-time. We didn't have any long-faced chaplain along with us, either. Every one did his own praying."

"I guess there wasn't much of that thing done?"

"We weren't overly pious, I assure you. But how did you put in the time, Ransom? It was a good long vacation."

"Well, you know, I always strike for the mountains. I'm a little like the eagle, I like the crags and silences and wildness of the high places. Of course, my sister expects me to spend most of my time with her. We had some grand rambles. We woke the echoes of the ridges and hunted up all the familiar spots of our childhood, marked the changes, and suggested to each other what might yet be. You know the associations of any thing render it doubly dear. So it is with my old home."

“ But, Ransom, you ought to get out into the world. You’ve too serious a look of things; your estimate of life is all too stern. What a man needs is gay society, high life, a general good time. Since we are in the world we must get out of it all we can. When we get into the next world (if there is any such) we must make all we can out of it. It don’t do to be too matter-of-fact, and to live as if we were afraid to say our soul is our own.”

“ Not quite so fast, if you please. What do you mean by making the most out of the present world ? ”

“ I mean that while we are in youth we should follow out the dictates of the mind as inspired by youthful ideas. We should gratify the desires we have, associate with those who are congenial to our tastes, and in general be regulated not by others, but by ourselves. Then when we get to be men, do the same, and so on—let death take care of itself. What better monitor does a man want than his own conscience ? ”

“ Why, Austin, you astonish me ! What is life ? The plot must be laid in correct convictions of duty to one’s self, his fellow, and his Maker. Your argument assumes that every

man lives for himself; that our lifetime is a period of self-gratification and pleasure. Your premise is unsound, your conclusion must be wide of the truth. The fortunes of eternity can never be made in eternity, the elements of strength, happiness, and well-being are the results of a pure heart—noble ambition, and a well-ordered life among men. Character is destiny, and he who would reap good must sow good.”

“You reason finely, Ransom, but I cannot see it in the same light that you do. I may change my opinion, but in the kind of life of which you speak there is too little snap.”

“Snap! snap! Mistaken again. What can be better than correct, moral principles finding an exponent in the every-day life of an intelligent being. Can there be any life so valuable as that in which a good, enlightened intellect extends to the moral feelings the scepter of its protection? Any in which the principles taught by the Saviour on the mount are woven into the very texture of the heart and life?”

“Why, Ransom, I didn't suppose you were going to preach a sermon!”

“A game of cricket! a game of cricket!”

cried a dozen voices. "Say, fellows, let's renew the old sport;" and the conversation was broken off quite abruptly.

College boys, as a general thing, do not need a tutor in the science of tricks, and the trustees at C. had accordingly endowed no "chair" in that department.

The union of New England blood with that of the "Old Dominion" was likely to produce a state of things which would require a degree of sternness not always found in college professors. The bridle of authority fell rather loosely about the necks of the boys at C., and the "prep." who succeeded in getting into the Freshman class without a double hazing was a fortunate fellow.

Ransom was called to stand in rather an anomalous position in the mischief-making business, inasmuch as his room-mate was generally a leader in such movements.

He wouldn't initiate any measure that would override the authority of the college or vex its guardians, and yet he was not going to be the tale-bearer of the class. His knowledge of plans and policies was all too full for his own satisfaction, and often brought him under the breath of suspicion.

One day it was discovered that a verdant countryman had brought to town a load of cord-wood to be sold at market the following day. Luckily for the boys he had driven in the rear of the college building, and unhitched his horses for the night. At midnight the wagon was taken apart, carried piece by piece to the flat roof of the college, put together again, and loaded with the wood. The Dutchman's wagon was, of course, an object of great attraction and merriment the next morning, but no one had done it. The Seniors were grave, the Juniors wouldn't condescend to so mean an act, innocence sat upon the faces of the Sophs., and as for the Freshmen every lamp of that honored class was out exactly at ten o'clock. The deed was wrapped in mystery. The faculty were almost sure they could lay their fingers upon the ringleader of the movement, but concluded to let time itself tell the tale. So a delegation of three from each of the four classes was appointed to bring down the wood and wagon.

The patience of the president and professors was taxed to its utmost time and again with these deeds of the night. The uninitiated greeny got his ducking in the "big spring;"

Uncle Salathiel Muggins was regularly locked in his rooms every Saturday night; Toby got into the chapel, and Brindle into the dining-room; and his innocence, the woolly buck, into the room of the chalk and blackboard. All this was material for the class historian on Commencement Day.

In vain did Ransom try to correct some of these evils. It was like beating the air; nevertheless he compromised not his own self-respect.

About this time the question of secret fraternities in connection with American colleges was being discussed in the public prints, and there was considerable division of sentiment among the students and professors at C.

The two literary societies agreed to hold a public meeting to discuss the subject. Several of the leading citizens of the town were to act as umpires. Old Library Hall was packed. The proposition was read:

“Resolved, That the abolition of secret fraternities is demanded by the spirit of the age.”

The debate was opened by Ransom. He argued that students were the wards of the college; that any organization in which the

proper officers of the school were excluded was subversive of the best interests of student-life; that secret meetings contemplated late hours, opened the door to unwholesome eating and drinking, and, in case of a conflict of opinion between the authorities and any of the classes, served to array the students by their oath to stand solidly together. As instances of the good effect of no secret fraternities upon the morals and discipline of youth, the Latin schools and gymnasiums of the German universities were cited.

Arthur M'Knight spoke upon the negative. He pleaded that the genius of American ideas forbade the restraint of personal liberty; that getting into college did not unman a man; that the cry of the "fraternities" being despotic was a bugbear to frighten the uninitiated.

The subject was discussed *pro* and *con* with considerable earnestness. Indeed, the faculty who were present were asked to speak upon the topic, and availed themselves of the privilege to say a great many things which they had been itching to say for a long time. The affirmative got the best of the debate, although there were some strong points made upon the other side.

But how the bright days swept forward. "Four years gone!" said Ransom to his chum. "Four years since we first met, and now almost ready to be separated, and it may be forever!"

"Yes! It does not seem so long as that. And how changed our class is! There's Mat Harvey got discouraged the very first year—discouraged when we were reading the 'Iliad.' I wonder what he would do if he had to get out some of the lessons that Professor Lyman gives us now. And then there's that flunky of a Masterman. I thought he'd just got out of the asylum when he came here. And Silas Small and Jim Osterhood, they soon drifted away. And poor Ned Heckle, whom we laid in the grave!"

"Only eight, I believe," said Ransom, "of the original class are to be graduated. It seems really sad."

Between Ransom and Austin there had never been a rupture. Their opinions did not always harmonize, and their habits were dissimilar; but they had no petty jealousies to annoy each other, no quarrels, no hidden hate. The clean-cut ideas of Ransom upon most questions had, however, made a marked change

upon the opinions of his chum. He felt that he was a better man for having had daily intercourse with one who obeyed the great Master. "Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." The great questions of "personal accountability," the "perils of procrastination," and the like, had been talked over, time and again. But Austin had never opened up the secrets of his inner life to any living being. He certainly had not been teased to enter the Christian life, but right words had done their work, and a good example had been as a Damascus blade.

It was a beautiful Sunday in May, just prior to their graduation. The young men had been to hear the Rev. Dr. Hosmer preach. His subject was "The Crisis of the Soul," based upon the familiar passage, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." The good parson had driven the nail home that morning with tremendous effect, and the Holy Spirit had blessed the faithful effort. Dinner being over, Austin threw himself nervously upon the bed, and his manner plainly indicated that he was greatly agitated.

“What now?” said Ransom.

“Nothing much.”

“Why, there must be something the matter.”

“O, I can’t describe my feelings. Dr. Hosmer seemed to be preaching to-day at me. I wonder if he prepared that sermon especially for me. It suited me so. I feel strangely. O my sin and unbelief! What ought I to do?”

“Do? Why, let us pray. The mercy-seat is accessible. We are taught to come humbly to it, yet with boldness. The Spirit is said to help our infirmities; and, if we but come to God in the name of his Son, he will fully save.”

“But I can’t pray. It seems as if I was beset by the infernal powers themselves. Everything looks dark before me.”

“It’s all very well for us to feel our sin—to know its enormity and guilt; but we must not stop there. We must look to the Saviour. We must know his love, his power, his willingness to save, and to save us now.”

The two knelt down together and prayed. And such prayer as it was! such strong desire; such wrestling; such perseverance. At last

the answer came. The poor man cried, and the Lord delivered him out of all his troubles. If the echoes of that old room had never been waked before, they were waked now as the humble penitent rejoiced in a risen and glorified Saviour.

“And evermore the waters worship God,
And bards and prophets tune their mystic lyres,
Whilst listening to the music of the waves.”



CHAPTER IV.

CONSULTING MODELS.

“And evermore the waters worship God,
And bards and prophets tune their mystic lyres,
Whilst listening to the music of the waves.”

“THE NAUGATUCK,” at sea, *Sept.* 20, 18—.

TO-DAY I embarked for the Old World. Is it so that I am to realize the visions of my early boyhood? It seems to me that I am only dreaming; but no, the turmoil and confusion of the last two hours here at the pier have convinced me that it is all reality. As we passed out of New York harbor, and the home-land began to recede, I was stirred by strange feelings.

Two hundred years ago only, the first English eyes looked upon this goodly Manhattan Island. Hudson had been cruising along the coast from Maine to the Carolinas. When he sailed up the river now bearing his own name he declared that it was the most beautiful country in the world. A late author photographs the scene with great power:

“The somber forests were shedding a melancholy grandeur over the useless magnificence of nature. No ax had ever leveled the giant progeny of the groves. Reptiles sported in stagnant pools or crawled unharmed over piles of smoldering trees; the spotted deer crouched amid the thicket, but not to hide, for there was no pursuer; the streams, not limited to a channel, spread over sand-bars tufted with copses of willows. But man, the occupant of the soil, was wild as the savage scene itself. A vagrant, in constant warfare with his fellows; strings of bells his ornaments, his records, and his coin; bended saplings the beams of his house; the branches and rind of trees its roof; dried forest leaves his couch, and his religion the adoration of nature.” But how sharp the contrasts to-day! As you look upon the surging crowds, pressing hither and thither, in the metropolis of the United States, you say, “What forces are lying in human nature! How they push themselves to the surface!” Give man a chance and a little time, and he will revolutionize the globe. He will overcome all natural barriers—force his passage through any difficulty, and face trial and even death—so that industry may gather strength,

literature take on better forms, and home comforts be multiplied. He will make nature his obedient servant.

September 26, 18—.

Salt-water notes must be taken on the wing. I made the last record in my Diary six days ago. I take back the ambitious words about man leading nature, and about her yielding such ready submission to him. I had never been upon sea before, and I have learned a few things.

Suppose old Neptune gets mad, what then? Well, you begin to get quiet and sit down as if meditating. If he gets very mad, you quit the deck and go to your berth. If he still rages, you pay him tribute. Any thing for peace.

I kept myself shy of the passengers all day, and contented myself with the thought that the merry old god would, after a while, mount his dolphin chariot, seize his trident, laugh at the incredulity of the sea monsters about him, and in a jiffy sweep the waves into calmness. And so he did. I begin to feel like myself again.

October 1, 18—.

A full-rigged ship riding the deep, breasting a gale, or lying quietly at anchor, is a thing of great beauty and interest. It is only a few years since this line of vessels has been established between New York and Liverpool, and the "Naugatuck" is one of its noblest ships. To-day I accepted an invitation of an old ship-builder from Maine to visit the vessel in detail. I confessed my ignorance of the sea and of ships and the seamen's language, and found his experience to be of great service to me. The "hold" was our first objective point, divided into the "main," "after," and "fore-holds," and the place where our miscellaneous cargo was stored. What a strange-looking place to a green landsman! My friend was very kind in explaining the whole process of building vessels. His description embraced the laying of the "keel," the formation of the ribbing, the construction of the state rooms, and the various requisites of a first-class vessel. The "sextant" is an ingenious instrument for determining the longitude. I had an interesting conversation with the sailor at the binnacle. The nautical phrases, though, are a puzzle. It is with great difficulty that I can comprehend

the orders of the little captain to his boys in blue.

October 3, 18—.

The real study of a ship, however, is human nature—the men and women and children who make up its crew and list of passengers. It doesn't require much time to get acquainted with each other on shipboard. Friendships made thus often ripen into love and match-making, and the girl you leave behind you is apt to be the sufferer. I have tried to steer clear thus far of all matrimonial alliances upon sea or land. Some of my friends think it high time that I seek my fortune in this particular, but I mean to see something of the world first. There are four hundred passengers on board, made up from ten nationalities. That light-haired, talkative young fellow, seated near the mizzen-mast, is a native of Finland. He is somewhat of an adventurer. The love of adventure was instilled into him by his father, who took him upon a cruise in the Mediterranean and other waters when he was but ten years of age. He is humorous and entertaining. He can draw a crowd at any time, if he wishes to, and keep it as long as he desires. But America, of all other countries, beat him.

A Yankee girl stole his heart and won his fortune. Her roguish eye indicates that she is pretty well satisfied with both.

Five Quakers are seated opposite me at the dining-table every day. They are on the way to their yearly meeting in London. They hail from the dear old Key-stone State, and, of course, I soon became interested in them. They are really agreeable. If I were to make a distinction I should say the ladies were especially agreeable. When they discovered that I knew a good deal of the origin and growth of their sect and of the terrible persecutions they had suffered, they seemed right communicative; so that my information in regard to Byllenge, Penn, Lucas, and others of the denomination, brought me many a pleasant hour. There is much in the creed, character, and every-day life of a "Friend" worthy of admiration. My intercourse with this band of gentlemen and ladies has not changed my opinion, made up years ago. What a variety of folk are here! A few merchants seeking foreign markets; tourists dreaming of ancient castles and cities in ruins, and of other antique remains, of smiling landscapes and snow-capped mountains; scholars enamored of

German thought, and coveting the best chances of old universities; artists, soldiers, health-hunters, all with a specific aim and hopeful of good. What a glorious gift is hope!

But I have been thinking of that other, though invisible, line which separates these peoples; not profession, nor color, nor condition in life, but that line drawn by the Creator—moral character. I am ready to conclude that within the narrow walls of this vessel there are numerous lives which, in aim, ambition, and positive destiny, are as far from truth as is the heaven from the earth. I could wish each one that joyous uplifting of spirit in the Son of God which should at once and forever fix their citizenship on high.

October 10.

The sublime in nature and religion we have to-day. It is Sabbath at mid-ocean. It is a day of golden memories, a day of real consecration, an emblem of the beautiful hereafter.

I rose early, while yet the darkness was upon the deep. Up and out of his watery bed, full-fledged and willing, came the prince of light. How could we get on without his kindling beams? Standing 'mid the silences and grandeur of the works of God, I repeated that

inimitable psalm from beginning to end, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork."

I was gratified at the religious services at eleven o'clock A.M. One of my Quaker friends read and expounded the passage commencing, "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep." His exposition was quite terse and elegant. The old man, with his broad-brim, seemed to think that it was his first, last, and only chance to teach salvation to the stranger, and he made the most of it.

October 11.

Who shall determine upon the life of the average sailor? What sharp angles! What stupendous vices! From the dangers incident to such a life one would not suspect that enough men could be found to man all the crafts which put out upon the waters year after year. But Jack is no inconsiderable quantity in the body politic. Cut off from the blessings of refined society, deprived of the rights of citizenship, and ground down beneath the heel of a despotism as violent and hateful as that of the

plantations in the Carolinas, what wonder that, as a class, sailors are so degraded?

Those attached to the "Naugatuck" are a hardy set. They, of course, understand their business. They can manipulate the lines and oars and masts with great skill.

I have inquired of some in regard to their early life and habits, and found them disposed to converse freely. Many of them have been cradled in vice, have had a taste for strong drinks even from the breast of their mother and, without opportunity for education, have been thrust out upon the wide world to see what life would do for them. Somebody must bear the blame if these souls find not a pleasant harbor in eternity. Who shall rise up in their behalf? Who devise methods for touching their sorry state?

What a fascination they have for the sea! To them a landsman is a nobody. If, from force of circumstances, they must quit their "life on the ocean wave," they are disconsolate and unhappy. I am reminded of a sailor-preacher, of Boston, whom I heard preach four weeks ago. He said, "A sailor never wants to be buried in the ground. He wants to be launched in the deep blue sea, where the coral rock shall

be his pillow, the sea-weeds his winding-sheet, and where old ocean shall sing his requiem for ever and ever."

October 15.

This morning our captain, by the aid of his glass, saw the English shore. I tell you there was rejoicing on board—a real sensation. We all crave a sight of land again. Our passage has not been unusually stormy; but still most of us prefer the dry land. Several ladies of the company declare they will give the Atlantic a contemptuous and final farewell if they live to get back again to their native America.

I feel grateful for the deliverances of the deep, and trust that the spirit of indifference may not be found in my heart in the presence of God's wonder-working and benevolent hand.

The mail delivered to us this morning indicates that French society is in a state of excitement. It is occasioned by a rumor that the great general at St. Helena is in a dying condition.

“In morals much depends upon an elevated standard.”

CHAPTER V.

CONSULTING MODELS—CONTINUED.

“In morals much depends upon an elevated standard.”

PARIS, *May* 20, 18—.

FRENCH character is a kaleidoscope. Viewed from any stand-point, it is full of contrasts, contradictions, beauties—a most novel and interesting study. It is about as important to know what to discard in it as to know what to imitate. Still, the wit, vivacity, and force of character manifested here among the middle classes are qualities to be admired.

One is struck with the bold and even reckless positions taken by the more thoughtful in matters of religious belief. So also the tenacity with which they defend these positions. The Parisians, especially, regard themselves as born leaders, and demand the championship upon all fields, whether they win or lose.

A certain vitality, a real recuperative power, attaches itself to this people. The desperate revolutionary schemes which have been at

work from time to time in the history of the nation, would have rent into innumerable factions and States any other nation in the eastern hemisphere.

The field of Waterloo is keenly remembered, and the great coalition of five European powers against France fills every heart with a sort of contempt. The public mind soon reaches white heat when you speak of the late defeats.

June 10, 18—.

The well-known anti-Christian opinions of Voltaire have found here a very prolific soil. Being a native of France, home-pride has given his works a rather wide circulation. Indeed, the "premises" of this voluminous author in religious matters have been pushed to their utmost conclusions.

It is not an uncommon thing to hear the young men at their social club meetings resolve that "Immortality is a will-o'-the-wisp," the Creator a "monstrous myth," man an irresponsible creature, and the preaching of Jesus Christ in the Judean corn-fields upon renunciation and self-sacrifice but the advice of a miser to a beggar.

All this sublime twaddle is having its bale-

ful influence upon moral character. But what a lack of devout reading, devout thinking, devout doing, is every-where manifest! What an absence of self-abnegation and true prayer among the young men! The contrast between this spirit and that shown in England or America is particularly great.

July 4, 18—.

This is a halcyon day in my native land. All day I have been thinking of the pride and glory of that young, free, and prosperous Republic. To properly appreciate it one must live awhile abroad. Without bias from birth-relations I think I can say no land presents so many possibilities to men as the United States.

I am not sorry that the French colonies in the United States—so numerous and so liberally patronized—did not succeed. After two full years in this city and in the rural districts, I do not change my opinion of the French people. This is most emphatically true in matters of religion.

I believe that the violence shown to Christianity from the days of the great Revolution until now, and which seems to be on the increase, found and finds its birth-throes in the strong desire that Christianity may not be

true. But this is the common verdict of sinful men, whether educated or ignorant. The Gospel crosses swords with their lusts and passions, and they hope and believe that it is all a myth. The reason why immortality has no existence with them, except in an imperfect brain, is because it is associated with the awful ideas of heaven and hell. The reason why God does not exist is because his searching eye beholds the evil and the good. The reason why man is but the rhythm of physical organism, and Jesus was a mere creature, is because after death comes a judgment, and that the Man of Calvary is to be the Judge of quick and dead.

November 10, 18—.

What are the causes which have led to the tremendous revolutions in this ungodly land? The changes have been most abrupt and precipitous — from monarchy to republic, from republic to directory, thence to monarchy again, and so on through the years. Has the unfaith of the people in God and in man anything to do with the matter? How is the Lord's day disregarded? How are the principles of Holy Scripture satirized? What licentious habits have the majority of the young

men? What trifling with things sacred? What trampling upon parental authority? How much of the blame belongs to Voltaire and his friends?

The plot of that man's conception was laid in the dissolute theories and practices of his times; his graphic delineations of character are but the reflection of the court of Louis XIV.

How about his own life, so full of immoralities and prejudices? Right here was laid the foundation of that great temple of unsanctified desire, at whose great shrine the French youth cast themselves without conditions.

If the infamous fingers of Louis had been paralyzed when he was destroying that great charter of Protestant liberties, and filling the land with mourning and tears, how changed would be the face of French society to-day!

But the good "word" of the kingdom was not to be totally destroyed. That which was buried in human hearts found afterward a joyous resurrection; that which found its way to other climes yielded the thirty, sixty, and a hundred fold. My own dear America was especially enriched thereby.

November 17, 18—.

How is it that the German reformation did not take stronger hold here? I cannot but regret that some iron man did not do for France what Luther did for Germany. Protestantism here boasts of some honored names I know, some who surrendered their lives for the truths of holy writ; but Calvin, Farel, Lefevre, and men of that stamp, lacked in something. For this God-blessed land there was wanting one bold, intrepid, and enthusiastic leader.

To-day every other man you meet holds allegiance to the holy father, the Pope. The nobility under Charles X. are most eminent defenders of that monstrous system of beliefs and practices. No scheme, great or small, for a more thorough propagation of Catholicism languishes in their hands. The throne and the altar are one and inseparable.

As for the citizen classes, born into the Church, indoctrinated in its mysteries from infancy, they stand ready to answer its call at shortest notice. No sacrifice of money or principle is held too dear to be laid with all promptitude at the feet of those who are set for that religion.

The lowest, or working classes, ever attracted by that which appeals to the senses, give a strong impulse to the religion of the miter and crown. This despotism in civil and Church matters is driving many beyond the ocean. Nevertheless, God be thanked, that some rich seeds were wafted across the Rhine, fell upon hearts here which have developed into strength and power, and are now yielding fruit. Some of my Protestant associates are noble men. I am so attached to several of them that I know it will be a sore trial to part with them, which I must shortly do.

January 1, 18—.

French politics smacks of freedom, fraternity, light. Quite a good trinity, by the way. But to be wrought up into a system, to be thrown out upon the body politic, and to get the victory in the nation, the divine Author of these noble principles dare not be ignored. His authority may not be set aside.

I confess to considerable disappointment in this, the land of my dear father. I always had strong prepossessions in its favor. Its history has been my study for years. Lorraine is where my father spent the first twenty-five

years of his life, and how natural that I should turn my eyes in this direction! I could never make my home here. I have a surfeit of French society, civilization, and history. The first is superficial, the second Christless, the third bloody.

In no land is the proverb, "Extremes meet," so fully exemplified as here, the very birth-spot of the proverb itself. Glory is cheap. As a friend at my elbow suggests, the people worship their idol to-day with all praise; to-morrow they are willing to thrust it into the gutter; the third day they will take it out again and enthrone it in their very hearts.

May 8, 18—.

Human nature, nurtured and led by the power of infidelity, or subject to the fallacies and prejudices of Jesuitism, presents a striking contrast to that same nature under the reign of divine grace.

How beautiful is a life in harmony with the Gospel!

In that gallery of portraits—the Hebrew Scriptures—are men and women of a splendid type. They are not perfect, nor does the Holy Spirit conceal their faults, but how were

they enshrined in the heart of the heavenly Father! How does their devotion to honor, truth, and general moral excellence stand out as a thing of real beauty!

Or, better still, look at New Testament characters—men who were known as pure and truthful by having been with Jesus; unlettered men who taught the people that purer lesson of morality and obedience in simplest measures; men in whom bitterness was changed to grace, and who denied themselves that they might help others; in them self-seeking and jealousies were transformed into evangels of blessing.

Even as the sculptor finds the highest type of innocence in the countenance of a little child, so, having looked into the faces of men of most cultivated intellects and politest manners, I find no such excellence as is manifest in the life of the Man in whose lips were found no guile, and who stood in the presence of Pilate without a shadow of fault. O that some kind ministry of heaven would put my own weak life into sweetest harmony with his words and spirit!

“Pleasant surprises are messengers of love.”

CHAPTER VI.

UNEXPECTED HELPS.

“Pleasant surprises are messengers of love.”

THERE was a little incident associated with the camp life of Byrne Ransom, which had followed him wherever he went.

It was as beautiful as a sunbeam. Its outlines were tinged with amber and gold. Go where he would he could not forget Sackett's Harbor, where the regiment lay so many weary months, and where his boy comrade met his dreadful fate.

A cheery and talkative girl had been in the habit of visiting the hospital from time to time. She came with such modesty, and with so many kind words and smiles, that the sick and wounded men were ready to forget their pain when she was near.

Emma M'Pherson was the daughter of a wealthy and aristocratic merchant. She did not take to the vanities of high life; she rather shunned society than courted it, and of late had turned her attention to those gentle

ministries which do untold good to others. She sought a channel for her spare moneys, and deprived herself of many articles of dress, so that she might become more useful to those about her. She had found an open door in the village hospital. She furnished various delicacies for the sick, books, papers, magazines, etc., for the convalescent, sent her carriage and driver to take them riding, and in other ways contributed to the healthfulness and pleasure of those who had enlisted in the service of their country.

By some means she had been especially attentive to George Harding. She kept constantly at his bedside some beautiful flowers, and would often tell him touching incidents to relieve the weariness of the hours, and to cause him to be more patient in his affliction, and that he might find his true rest in believing the Gospel.

She had not repeated her visit many days until young Ransom found himself admiring the strange girl, and making room in his heart for strong desires to know more of her history. But any attention upon his part or efforts at a better acquaintance were met by repulses. In vain did he endeavor to draw her out in con-

versation. She would talk to the sick and wounded or pray with the dying, but she seemed perfectly insensible to every thing like friendship-making. A stripling, wearing blue, and not out of his teens, found no resting-place in her heart for his fugitive, low glances.

Ten years had swept into eternity. Those years were brimful of trial, anxiety, and toil for Sergeant Ransom. A strange spirit had guided his steps, and yet not so strange either, for it was the spirit of truth.

As he embarked on the homeward voyage at Havre, on the sixteenth of June, he registered his name in a good, bold hand in the record-book of the "City of Baltimore."

As his eye ran over the list of passengers he caught the sight of a name which was as familiar to him as that of his own. It was "Emma M'Pherson, Sackett's Harbor, New York, U. S. A."

The blood rushed to his cheeks. Could he be deceived? "Emma M'Pherson, indeed. Sackett's Harbor! Well, I guess I'll know one passenger on this old boat;" and, so saying, he went into the ladies' parlor. When their eyes met there was a smile of surprise

and gladness upon each countenance. Both had grown older, but the changes had not prevented a mutual recognition. What reminiscences were called up! What questions asked! What wonders expressed! What sallies of wit and detailing of experiences were indulged in!

Miss M'Pherson had been spending a year in Italy. Two years previous her mother had gone thither for the benefit of her health. While absent she had died and was buried at Naples. Emma, an only child, could not rest satisfied until she had found the very spot and made it fragrant with something more than perishing flowers; for beneath those balmy skies, and in presence of that lonely mound, she had sought a complete affiliation with the beautiful and good, and was ready to give her life to any cause in which these principles were first and foremost. She would not complain of a Providence which had left her alone in the world, if through that Providence she might get nearer to truth.

The interview of the parties was agreeable indeed. Fortune had thrown them together even in a foreign sea. What wonder if the fire which had been kindled in Ransom's heart

years ago, but so rudely smothered, should begin to kindle again.

Another interview, and still another, coming each time nearer to the "main question," until finally the whole story was told.

There are some strange adventures connected with youthful lives; strange enough to make one believe that an unseen and superior Intelligence handles the destiny of men. Surely it was a chain of extraordinary measures which had linked times and seasons, arrivals and departures, detentions and sicknesses, and the thousand and one contingencies of life, and brought thus together upon a foreign shore two friends of former years. Providential or accidental, this happy circumstance had much to do with molding the future of two beautiful lives.

The home-bound voyage was quite unpleasant. When they had been out a few days a terrible storm swept the waters. The ship became altogether unmanageable. The captain almost lost his self-possession, and the brave tars were unusually alarmed. To add to the distress and discomfort of the occasion, a water-spout poured out its contents upon the sea and created a panic among the pas-

sengers. To still add to the disaster, the captain is swept overboard and lost in the surging floods. If God does not soon stay the bottles of heaven, the valuable vessel and more valuable freightage will be wholly lost. Despair is upon every face. Fortunes are nothing now. Friendships, purposes, resolutions are but idle fancies. The one great aim and prayer is that Heaven might interpose and bring the speedy deliverance. Men prayed who never prayed before. Women wrung their hands and cried for help. When the storm spent its subtle forces the bright moon peered out of its hiding-place in the heavens and looked down in a quiet way upon the deck as if nothing had happened.

As it is an "ill wind that blows no good to any," so when the vessel put back for repairs, and our young friends re-embarked for America, a strange label was found upon the trunk of Miss M'Pherson, namely: Mrs. Emma M'Pherson Ransom. Two lives were now blended in one. Some days were spent upon their arrival at Sackett's Harbor before they started to the mountains.

It was the golden month of June. The air was redolent of flowers. The trees were

dressed in most charming colors. Did the valley of the Juniata ever look more handsome than now? Never. Did hours ever sweep away more rapidly than those in which the old "packet" pushed its way through the landscape-stretches and along the ridges from the capital of the State to Bridgeton? Never. Were there ever more joyous memories flitting about the threshold of youthful lives? Never.

As the "packet" landed at the Bridgeton wharf it was nightfall. The dim outlines of the old town and its environs were welcome guests. A few familiar words to a friend or two, and the parties went up through Montgomery-street and over the hill to the residence of Ransom's sister. He had not apprised Clara of his coming, nor yet of his marriage. He thought a pleasant surprise always lent a charm to one's coming.

"I wonder what in the world those extra lights mean in Clara's house?" said Ransom to his wife.

"I fancy it's an illumination in honor of our coming," she answered.

"Hardly that, I think," was the reply of Ransom.

"Ha! ha! I know what it is," said Emma. "Your sister is as 'sharp' as you are. She has heard of our coming, certainly, and there is no surprise at all. The secret is out—I know it is."

"Not so fast, my dear; but we'll soon see," and so saying he pushed open the door without knocking, and broke out abruptly, "A distinguished arrival! Honored guests! Hon. Mr. —" He paused.

It was a brilliant scene. Theodore Austin, his old college mate, was being joined in holy wedlock with Miss Laura Ransom.

The scene which followed may be better imagined than described. No one could tell exactly what was the chief joy. There were laughter and tears, hand-shaking and kissing, while a right royal welcome was accorded the strangers from abroad. The climax was reached when old Uncle Ben came limping into the room, convulsing the house with his quaint and side-splitting exclamations.

"It surely makes a difference whether we believe or do not believe that our thought power and moral power shall or shall not be extinguished."

CHAPTER VII.

DOWNRIGHT EFFORT.

"It surely makes a difference whether we believe or do not believe that our thought power and moral power shall or shall not be extinguished."

"WELL, husband," said Mrs. Ransom one day, "don't you think it about time that we should get down to solid work? How you have been roaming around ever since you were born!"

"Now, Emma, you're talking!"

"Of course I'm talking. You turned the sharp corner of bachelorhood long ago. Let me see! You are thirty—"

"Come, come now! Don't be judging me by the number of moons I've seen. Surely, that isn't fair. There's Charley Jenkins, with his money and fast horses and devotion to business—do you think I am ready to exchange places with him? I like to have a man say something when he talks, and it is impossible to say something unless you have a little information."

"But how does that excuse you, my dear? O, I see! you pride yourself upon what you have seen abroad. But there's something else to do besides gaping in the windows of foreign cities and observing the habits and modes of life of other people. And then a rolling stone gathers but little moss."

"True enough, but how about the sitting goose never getting fat?"

"But, Byrne, I'm in dead earnest about this question."

"And so am I! A fine house well-furnished, a richly cultivated farm, fast horses, etc., are all very well in their place; but breadth of view is better than all. So is a knowledge of men and things. Aren't they, Emma?"

"Yes, I suppose they are. But then—"

"Then what?"

"Why, how are we to get forward in the world? We can't eat books, and men, or knowledge. We shall need bread and meal. And how are we to get practical knowledge of men and things unless we get down into the heart of business life? And, then, we can't always expect to have as good health as we have now. The world owes us both a living; but, then, we must seek it. There is Tobias

Moore. He was thrifty, earnest, economical in his earlier life, and since his affliction he has been in as comfortable circumstances as before. He has something for the rainy day."

"Well said, wifey! well said! Give me a woman for bottom advice and for taking care of number one."

"Yes, and number two, too!"

"Yes, yes!"

"Well, you'll make the money and I'll save it."

"All right! I wish I had a thousand or two to give you now."

"Wishing will not bring it, my dear. That particular ship which every body talks about as coming across the ocean for them never seems to set sail. I suppose, though, yours will soon be over now. You likely attended to the matter when you were in Europe."

"And pray what have you been doing all these years, Madame Ransom? What have you to show for your labor? It's a poor rule that won't work both ways."

"O, you couldn't expect as much from a young girl like me, not very strong, nor blessed with as happy surroundings as some. A strong and vigorous young man, with an open door

on every side, surely ought to outstrip me. And yet I profess to have steady nerves, plenty of courage, and some little common sense."

"Well, that last thing is a fortune, Emma, in itself. And all that you have mentioned, and more too, is all true. And well did I know it all, long before I met you on shipboard. You see I couldn't wait on my fortune to come over; I went after it, and brought it in the same vessel with me."

"Tut! tut! Byrne, talk sense. You are always having sport at my expense."

The conversation ended here by the arrival of some friends from a distance. If the whole truth were known, though, both Ransom and his amiable wife had been doing a great deal better than they cared to acknowledge or proclaim. It is ever the nature of merit to be unconscious of its real power.

Mr. Ransom had been on the editorial staff of an English newspaper while on his tour through Europe. His tutor in mathematics had secured this position for him. It is true he had not been able to save much money, but he had managed to pay all his old school bills, and had something remaining. He knew it was a dangerous experiment to launch out up-

on the sea of matrimonial life without somewhat of a competency, but then that splendid chance for getting a splendid wife, he thought, might never come back again. So, taking it all in all, he concluded to take all the risks, and trust in the Father above.

Upon the other hand, Mrs. Ransom, quite early in life, had fallen in love with landscape sketching and painting, and by constant effort had come to be somewhat of an expert. Since the failure in business of her father she had more than maintained herself by teaching classes of young ladies.

The two, therefore, while starting out together, all too late, perhaps, hoped, nevertheless, to make up for lost time in the diligence with which they intended to apply themselves. To be competent in any line is to succeed.

Bridgeton scenery was far-famed. There was associated with it all manner of variety, from the bold and romantic mountain views to that of the valley and plain, with their endless attractions and superior stretches of beauty. It became quite early a resort for the wealthier classes of P. and B. The New England bridal party could not resist the pleasure that was in store for them in spending

some weeks at Bridgeton. With Laura Austin as guide, they intended to compass the whole beautiful country lying in the vicinity of the town.

What delightful rides were those through Wild Cat Glen, Madison's Cove, and Woodland Retreat! What picturesque outlooks from the Summit House, Kittanning Bend, Fountain Inn! What beautiful hours those spent in boating and fishing at Lake Le Moyne; in the excursions to Lander's Cave, Hunter's Lodge, Chimney Rocks, Dell Delight, the great Indian War Trail, and nameless other secluded spots along the banks of the historic river.

While roaming about one day in the neighborhood of the Flaming Spring, Austin and Ransom had seated themselves upon a ledge of rock overlooking the dilapidated village of M., and here, studying the picture rather minutely, Ransom broke the silence by saying: "See here, Austin, we seem to splice together pretty well; suppose we enter into business together, and seek out our fortunes?"

"All right," said Austin. "But what in the world shall we go at?"

"I think I have the plan. Bridgeton has



Dell Delight.

become in the past few years quite a town. I never dreamed that it would wake up from its Rip Van Winkle sleep; but it has, though, and pretty effectually. I believe in time it will make a very flourishing city. It seems to me there is an opening here for a first-class daily newspaper. Do you think we should be able for it?"

"Capital! capital!" cried Austin.

"O yes! capital in more senses than one. Capital as an idea, and capital to give the idea some force. If we only had the money I shouldn't be a bit afraid to risk the enterprise."

"Well, that reminds me. Father was casting about some time ago for a safe investment for three thousand dollars which he has in hand. If we could convince him that our enterprise would succeed, and could borrow the money at a small advance, I believe we could make the thing go."

"No doubt of it," responded Ransom. "But it would require very careful management, sharp calculating, and judicious living. Borrowed capital in the hands of greenhorns does not always net a handsome profit. If we should systematize our affairs, and agree to live strictly within our income, and then stick to it, I

think that in time we should succeed. If not, we might stick again, but in quite another way. Suppose you write your father and see what can be done."

"All right. I'll write him to-morrow."

The Rev. Mr. Austin was a man of great versatility of character. Thoroughly awake to the principles and maxims which guide men in business, he knew right well what constituted the conditions of success. He had studied men as well as sermons. The young men were wholly inexperienced, and neither of them was a practical printer. Mr. Austin's son knew more about spending money than saving it, or even making it. The young man Ransom was a comparative stranger. George's letter didn't strike fire. Some days afterward George arrived himself at his father's home, bringing with him his buoyant bride. The two were so enthusiastic about the enterprise, and spoke so hopefully of the opening at Bridgeton, that the clergyman gave the firm the benefit of his doubts, and loaned them the money at four per cent.

There is a strong fascination about a first enterprise. A few difficulties lie about the background of the picture, but lines of hope

and promise and sunshine stand out in bold relief.

The preliminaries connected with the work were soon arranged. A suitable room was secured, an outfit provided, and a few men hired to do the practical work. In a fortnight the "Bridgeton Daily Argus," in a neat prospectus, threw itself upon the community, a candidate for popular favor—Ransom, as editor-in-chief; Austin, business manager.

In intellect both were above mediocrity. Each had received a classical education. What was needed to develop their faculties was contact with men of the world in the sphere which they had chosen. The public was early committed to the enterprise. It was the old story of ability commanding power. The paper was to occupy a great field. It was to combat many vices which had managed to get a stronghold in that ancient town. Whisky-drinking, profanity, card-playing, idleness, cock-fighting, had created a wide-spread demoralization. The door of privilege stood ajar. Any might enter and devote himself to the work of reformation. These youths were bold enough to press the door wide open, and seize the gauntlet which had been thrown down by the enemy.

Their salutatory had in it the true ring; the subject was

“JOURNALISM.

“The growth of American journalism has been unprecedented in the last ten years. To forecast its triumphs would be impossible. Along the highways of thought, letters, and commercial industries shall ever and anon be found the evidences of its potential touch. American sentiment is a variable commodity. It could not be christened a commodity if it were never in the market. But it is in the market. It is bought and sold. As the exponent of our political system, the press caters too much to the ambitions of party demagogues. A government such as ours—in the hands of the people—subjected to the sudden and violent changes of periodical elections, as well as to the sinister policies of designing men—such a government must have a safeguard. That safeguard should be the editorial pen.

“‘The Bridgeton Argus’ shall be devoted to correct principles as far as we are able to discover them, and to men who will become their earnest exponents. We make but few prom-

ises. Our career shall be our trumpet, and a thoughtful public the umpire. It is not the purpose to publish a strictly religious paper, but we shall not blush to look upon every question from a high moral and religious standpoint, not weakening the truth by failing to bring it to the biblical touch-stone but equally avoiding all cant and religious goodishness.

“We shall advocate honesty in trade, politics, and the professions—honor among all men, sobriety of life, the abolition of negro slavery, and political equality in all these lands.

“We give notice to political aspirants for office and all cliques, that our columns are not open to the highest bidders. We covet no man’s respect except we earn it, and no man’s money unless we give him a fair equivalent. Upon this basis we rear our superstructure, otherwise we prefer not to build. We ask to be judged by the touch-stone of an enlightened moral sense, and, if meritorious, to secure the sympathies of the common people.”

“Nameless secret deeds, like bruised flowers,
have a delightful fragrance.”

CHAPTER VIII.

OTHER BUILDERS.

“Nameless secret deeds, like bruised flowers, have a delightful fragrance.”

IN the swift escape of the years there had come into the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ransom a half dozen of God's choicest gifts. There were Maud and Nan and Frank and Guy and Oscar and Fred. Maud was the eldest, a girl of sixteen summers, of slender build, fair complexion, and beautiful voice. Quite early she had evinced a strong passion for books. Observe her when and where you might, she was deep in some favorite author. Her mother often said if she should shut her up a whole month she would deem it no punishment provided it was in the library with enough to eat and drink. But she was not careful what she read. Her omnivorous appetite made no discrimination. From the Bible to the newspaper, old magazines and books, novels, poetry, biography—any thing at all so it was only in print. She was threat-

ened more than once with a place among the nuns at Loretto unless she would change her habits. But the passion was there; read she would and read she did.

Nan was her antipode in every thing. As good-natured and rollicking a girl as you ever laid your eye upon—always in a good humor, and withal a great romp. Her curly head was always in a swing, her keen black eyes always in a dance. She was the friend of every body in Bridgeton, and had been on every ridge and hill about the town a thousand times. She would take her microscope and field-glass and hammer, of a morning, and range the woods and stroll about the streams, putting a new light upon things, perfectly oblivious of the work at home which she had left behind her. Of all the stuff from the woods and fields, in the shape of ores and stones and rock formations, which she had stowed away there was enough to interest and profit a town. She would much rather study Nature in her wonderful varieties than to eat a good dinner. Time and again she would get the consent of her mother to accompany the boys in their fishing excursions, when she would feel as free as a gazelle which has its home amid the crags.

She could tear more dresses and knock out more shoes than any half dozen girls in town. Nor did any of them attempt to keep time with her in study or work or play.

Once her mother thought she discovered in her traces of piety. Nan's visits to the old garret attracted the mother's attention, who supposed that her dear daughter went there to pray. Her heart was filled with gratitude. One day, however, her mother followed her quietly. What was her surprise! Instead of a case of devotion it was a little private stealing. She was filling her pockets with dried apples, and had kept this operation going so long that the barrel was half empty. It is due to truth, however, to say that Nan was blamed for a great many things of which she was not guilty, as she became the scape-goat of the whole tribe.

Frank and Guy were twins, chubby boys of about nine and a half. Oscar was still younger, Fred was in the cradle.

The study of these varied dispositions was the constant effort of both father and mother. They intended that the lives of their children should, if possible, be raised above the possibility of failure. They sought to lead out the

minds of each into that broad and wealthy place in which is found power and blessing. The word home was made to mean something. How to make that home paradise for the little ones was the supreme thought. Mr. Ransom had given special attention to the science of living, and had an elevated conception of what was necessary for a Christian home. An hotel or boarding-house, as a place to rear children, was to him contemptuous. The nonsense of much of the table-chat, the after-dinner discussions amid the fumes of fragrant havanas, as well as the absence of those strong chords of sympathy which should bind people together, made the proverb true, "The reek of my own home is better than the fire of another." Home meant more than brick and mortar—more than velvet carpets and damask curtains, or elegant furniture or frescoed walls. It meant the royal cheer of a good-natured husband, the ministries of a pure and good woman, the ringing laugh of joyous children, a well-spread table, the evening lamp, the hour of prayer, the pleasures of Sabbath, memories of years ago, the sweep of earnest effort, the blending of hopes and fears, and the charm of contented minds. Ah! it was a

real tonic to go to Grassmere. The house itself was rather unpretentious. The architect had been governed rather by good taste than by a love of display. It stood upon a gentle knoll outside the borough, with a beautiful green sward stretching itself on either side.

The Lawsons owned a magnificent residence near at hand, brilliant in its architectural display and in all its appointments. It put Ransom's property far in the shade. But there was this difference between them: the first was paid for, the other was not. The one was cosy, tasteful, convenient; the other had about it the air of a cheap aristocracy. The Lawson girls made much ado about polite society, fashionable parties, high-toned relations, the theater, etc. With the Ransoms it was not so. The father had come up out of the humblest walks of society. His parents were poor, but honest and respectable. Mrs. Ransom had been reared amid all the charms of fashionable life. But there was in her a spirit of nobility. The two struck a golden mean of life, in which work is no disgrace but debt a consuming moth; where work is deemed no drudgery, but idleness a crying shame.

In the mistress of Grassmere there were

blended the dignity of real culture, the accomplishments of a true lady, and the industrious habits of womanhood. It was her passion for flowers that gave to almost every room in her home a sweet breath. It was her hands which decorated the grounds with hyacinths, roses, geraniums, etc. Fullness, ease, good taste, presided every-where. The family room was a gem in its way. There was plenty of sunshine; there was a strong, beautiful carpet on the floor; the furniture done in dark colors, a few busts of the old scholars, a few pictures, a pretty aquarium, some games and toys, and a cabinet of rapidly growing dimensions.

It could not be otherwise than that, amid such surroundings, the characters of all should receive a tone and finish commensurate with the efforts put forth to make it so complete a home. Life is usually made up of littles, and the good we seek for others reflects its good upon ourselves.

It soon became evident that Maud Ransom, now turned in her twentieth year, was not designed to lead such a life as would bring her into contact with the world. She would shun the society of her own sex, and as for beaux—well, she detested them. Her father



Twin Towers on Chimney Ridge.

said that he had no doubt she was to be that antiquated yet useful fixture at Grassmere—the old maid. It was to be her lot to serve all, see the younger members of the family disappear by marriage, and, launching out into the deep of an every-day experience, go forward or downward as the case might be.

But her life must be freighted with better things. Her mother gave her instruction in portrait and landscape painting. Out from the hiding-place in the garret came the old table, the trundle bed, the broken chairs, to make room for the artist's studio. Frank made her an easel, and the contributions from all the children furnished the means to buy the paints and canvas. A vein was struck which would lead to contentment and delight. She, in time, selected some of the choice scenery about Bridgeton for purposes of sketching, and seemed to enjoy hours and days in communing with the works of Him to whom she had already committed her time and life.

For habits of industry she had but to turn to the example of her mother. Born with a strong taste for all that was pure in art and literature, she adopted early a course of reading in biography, history, travels, etc. This

source of improvement became a thing of constant pleasure, and now, in the full bloom of womanhood, with multitudinous cares upon her, she found spare hours for gathering knowledge. With a ready pen, she was not slow to communicate the same. An outlet was readily found in her father's newspaper. The profession had not as yet adopted the plan of paying for manuscripts, but as a stimulus to further effort, and, indeed, in order to get hold of articles upon certain subjects handled with such skill, many of her poems and stories had an ample return in ready cash. Out of that old plethoric portfolio, handed down as an heirloom, there are specimens of her literary labor worthy of recognition. Here is a song on

WEAVING.

"O, I'm a weaver," sang busy old Time,
And his voice rang out in a dirge-like chime,
"I'm weaving the web of many a life
With a woof of joy and a warp of strife ;
My noiseless shuttles unceasingly run
For the work of old Time is never done.
As spring-time weaves in her carpet of green,
Patterns of gold with azure between,
Then gems them o'er with cups of pink
Invitingly set for the bees to drink,
And lavishes on the morn of the year
All that is bright and all that is dear—

So when I weave for youth the bright strands
I lavish my gifts with careless hands,
The wealth of gold, the crimson of joy,
The blue of love—sweet, modest, and coy,
I twine together in a carpet sweet,
And spread it out for their nimble feet.
But when for age my shuttles I ply,
'Mong tresses of brown so cunning, so sly,
I mix here and there the threads of gray
Which have lain unused from day to day,
And the joy-wreathed web which in youth begun
Must needs be finished in brown or dun.
And all the distorted and twisted shreds
The tangled ends and broken threads,
The work of tears and grief and sin,
Ere the web is done, must be woven in.
But my heart is hard, and I shed no tears
O'er the dull gray web of wasted years.
Yet moved at times to a softer tone
By a strange, wild pity, all my own,
I spread out the web when roses bloom
A fragrant portion at morn or noon,
And smile to see the anxious eyes gaze
Loving and long through the tear-dimmed haze,
And joy to note a strange light beam
On the wrinkled face as of one in a dream,
When the dream is sweet, and the fairest face
Is seen again in its old-time place,
Or after long years in crossing a plain,
Where a gem which was lost is found again.
Thus age on age my shuttles I ply
While men are born—grow old and die,
Untiring still in my ceaseless work
In days of sunshine or cloud or murk
Weaving the thread of many a life
With a woof of joy and a warp of strife."

“Beyond the river of Time walk the brave men
and beautiful women of our ancestry.”

CHAPTER IX.

FROM REFRESHMENT TO GRIEF AND BACK AGAIN.

“Beyond the river of Time walk the brave men and beautiful women of our ancestry.”

WHAT home does not have unwelcome shadows thrusting themselves in upon joyous scenes? How dark and stern are some of the outlines of our best experiences? What invisible fingers are these which change mirth and gladness into distresses sharp and peculiar? Affection's chain, forged by kindness, tenderness, and grace, is sometimes riven by violence.

It was difficult to determine the exact nature of the disease which had stricken down the versatile and affectionate Nan.

When Dr. Raymond said that the symptoms were alarming, the household was stricken with inexpressible pain. Is the foe, whose love is a shining mark, drawing the bow and directing the arrow, so as to rob Grassmere of one of its brightest ornaments? It cannot be,

and yet she seems to be Death's most coveted prey. The vacant chair, the absence of the merry, ringing laugh told a tale of common grief.

To watch and wait is sometimes the great trial-lesson of life, and this lesson was practiced here, for at that bedside there was a constant watcher. Day and night the soft, gentle voice of mother was heard, and the footsteps meant help and good nursing. There were other willing hands and hourly ministrations, but none were so sweet as those which sprung from the heart of her who was at once a solace and a guide. The patient grew worse and worse with each succeeding day. There were two weeks of most intense suffering, and yet of competent treatment, and then hope seemed to surrender to doubt. Gloom and silence held the field, when eye was cast on eye, as she said, "You must give me up; the Father above seems to call me to himself!" Then there were noiseless steps and smothered utterances, while each praying heart uttered a cry that she might be spared. At midnight of that trying time came the crisis. Strange to say, it resulted for the better. God had taken that home-circle down to the very edge of one of earth's

greatest griefs, and brought them back again with tears and gladness, a joyous, thankful company. The young convalescent was, of course, the subject of much inquiry. Her companions, like a set of soldiers without a captain, wished her back to their circle with strong desire. Their wishes were not in vain.

The long-continued efforts of Mrs. Ransom during the illness of her daughter had somewhat impaired her health, which led her to plan for a visit to New England. It was the evening before her departure. All arrangements had been completed, and the trunk packed. The good-night kisses were given and the family retired early. In the morning "she was not!" for God had taken her! In the stillness of midnight some heavenly visitant had borne away the spirit.

From heights of happiness that household is thrust down into the silences of unbearable grief. The word of God had been for years the text-book of that home. The daily reading at prayer and the memory-verses recited by each had been the theme of many table-talks. Will the teachings of that old book be of any service now? Will its promises be available? We shall see.

Mr. B., the pastor of the church of which the Ransoms were members, had passed through a similar sorrow during the preceding year. His sympathies and words were full of tenderness. As he stood by the quiet bier he spake words of tenderness and hope. He said :

“ Our great desire seems to be to get beyond the power of mental and physical distress. Riches may quiet our sufferings in a measure, and worldly circumstances may modify our feelings under bereavements, but nothing can stay disease or keep away from our homes that dreadful visitant which we call ‘death.’ His broodings over our households bring forth nothing but pain. Grief is in constant pursuit of us, dear friends. With muffled feet and sullen accents he comes to cut asunder the tenderest chords of human affection. The sense of sorrow at such times becomes to many almost unendurable.

“ Others, not guarded by the power of religion, seek relief in strong drink, desertion of home and children, and sometimes in the fatal knife.

“ In this sin-smitten world what force is able to resist this mighty current which comes

flooding in upon us. Let me ask whether it is not despair which gives the keen edge to sorrow with men of no hope in Christ? Is not the fear of waking in the pit at last, beyond the reach of hope and mercy, the bitterness of the worldling's cup? It is, it is.

“ I will not speak of the loss of property, or of the disappointments and losses in business, nor yet of the overthrow of well-laid schemes. Most men will rally under such discouragements. But how is it with the stern and relentless hand of death? What of the dreadful farewells of a dying bed? the distressing vacancies in the charmed circle of home? To a worldling the grave is the one spot of perpetual gloom. It is the horrid line of everlasting separation between those who were wont to love. Such men may cover the coffin with fragrant flowers; they may rear splendid shafts in honor of their departed dead; they may beautify the place of graves with all the skill and finish of art, but an indescribable sorrow will settle down upon them—a sorrow which will not always yield to the pressure of circumstances. Sorrowful memories and gloomy presages of the oncoming days haunt the consciences of those who fear not God.

“But he who trusts the Saviour is raised above this extraordinary gloom. If a beloved child is taken away by death, it is to him simply the heavenly Gardener gathering a bud wherewith to make fragrant the palace of God. If his companion dies, it is the entering into the rest of Paradise. With failing health the mental processes are still the same. With the worldling the approach of disease is the beginning of dismay. He seeks the restoration of health in some more congenial clime. When that restoration does not come he thinks God unjust. He cannot brook the idea of dying. As one by one the days escape and the remedies are exhausted he hopes against hope, but refuses to die. While the Christian, upon the other hand, may make all possible efforts at recovery, he meekly submits to the will of the Father in heaven. He hails with gladness the triumphant hour. Before him stretch the illimitable fields of bliss, for ‘eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.’”

Such were some of the strong words of help and encouragement which came from the lips

of the religious teacher. They were not without weight. The Easter lilies which fell from loving hands into the open grave were symbols true of that which was believed by every member of the family.

It was a tender and beautiful ending of the day, as in the twilight hour that broken circle lifted their voices in song. As each thought of a blissful reunion above, the words were few and the tones subdued.

The first month dragged slowly forward, and the second and third. What weariness, what home-sickness filled those hearts? The affliction was so sudden; the one was taken who could be least easily spared. Such are the inscrutable ways of Him who doeth all things well.

The management of home now fell largely upon Maud. She had much to learn. The anxiety increased as she thought of those who needed her constant oversight. She found herself impatient at times, and chafed amid the irksome details of every day. The children were granted a vacation of several weeks from school, and the visits of Aunt Clara were so agreeable as to give somewhat of buoyancy to all. Still, there was a vacancy at

Grassmere which almost defied submission. To Nan the landscape had lost much of its beauty, the wild flowers were less bright, and the songs of the birds but plaintive cries. The boys wandered about the old home, trying to be contented, while every day little mementos came to light which revealed unfinished plans and broken expectations.

The heaviest blow, of course, fell upon Mr. Ransom. The providences of his path had been pleasant in the main, and life had for him somewhat of fascination. He broke its monotony by following out his convictions of truth and obligation. A new sphere opened up before him. It was to help his children over the rough places of their way, and help them to pierce the veil of unbelief which, seemingly, would shut out the goodness of God.

Efforts from others had only served to increase their trouble. Mollie Lawson, a sentimental miss, undertook to condole with the girls. She advised them to make a trip to the southern sea-coast and secure a change of scenery and climate and society. She knew they would enjoy it and return greatly benefited. They would surely forget their trouble.

This "forgetting of their trouble" was the very thing they did not want to happen. They realized they owed their mother a great debt of gratitude, and there was now no other way for them to show an appreciation of her worth except by daily remembrance and daily grief. When she was with them, meditating their pleasure and active in promoting their happiness, they had not been so dutiful as they should have been. Now they will pay her memory heartfelt devotion. To Miss Lawson they made reply: "We cannot think of a pleasure trip at the present, but prefer the quietude of our own home."

"But," said the persistent caller, "your affliction is one that is common in all homes, and cannot be helped. Casper Ray, you know, of Long Green, buried his wife about five months ago, and, lo and behold, I saw him last Sunday gallant Miss Dorothy Lucas to church."

Nan's eyes flashed fire.

"Do you mean by that that my father will so far forget himself as to disgrace us all by that kind of work? No, indeed!"

She left the room in disgust, saying in a scarcely audible voice:

"What a senseless thing, to be sure! She always was stupid enough, but this is adding insult to injury. She ought to have some respect for one's feelings."

The next day after the interview by Miss Lawson, Aunt Peggy Morton called to see the dear, good, motherless children. She came over from Karsen in the stage, and was much fatigued upon her arrival. The girls thought it was a call, but it turned out to be a visit—a three-weeks' visit.

"Your dear mother," she would say, "was so nice. I allers had sich a terrible liking for her ever since I came from the Jarseys. She was so like my old grandmother, dead and gone now this many years. Never will I see the like o' her again;" and, so saying, she kept on knitting, all the while looking over the top of her spectacles to see how the "gals" would take it. She continued: "And suppose, now, your papa was dead, and you were all sick, and your house was sold by the sheriff, and you had to go a-beggin' in this wicked world, wouldn't that be kinder bad?"

The young ladies were too incensed to conduct a conversation on that line, and went about the house rather morose. They were

wishing the old woman would get tired and leave for home. Fulsome praise they despised. Her remarks, anyhow, showed too great a familiarity with sacred feelings, and, taking it all in all, nobody had solicited her presence or cared for her sympathy. At last the golden hour for departure came.

The leave-taking was rather formal. The old lady managed to say a few blunt things, as she kissed the dear, good children, which only served to deepen the disgust. The boys were almost violent in their expressions of gladness at the leaving, and old Carlo seemed to catch the spirit, too, and bow-wowed after the stage as it passed out of the lane toward Karson.

Mr. Ransom had heard of the attempts to ease the trial of his children. He looked upon all such efforts with disdain. Even the measure most generally proposed, of waiting until time should assuage the grief, was discarded. He had learned a better way. He resolved to make an open passage-way for each one to the only pure and enduring fountain of pleasure known among men. That fountain was the word of God. Often upon the highway of business and domestic care he had stopped to slake his thirst at these perennial waters. Nay,

he had camped beside the refreshment for many years. That Word had its origin in love—had been preserved through all the changing years. It had been to the generations the one blessed spiritual drink—free to all—flowing from the smitten rock, the Lord Jesus. It was competent for any emergency. He must break the seal, so that the obedient waters might be a well of water springing up into eternal life. Not that his children were strangers to the Book, nor yet that they were anywise unbelieving as to its teachings. Mrs. Ransom had been in the habit of taking her children to her chamber, and of trying to impress upon their minds the nature of its teachings, and the necessity of adopting the Bible as the safeguard of their every-day life. But they had never learned to trust in the hour of temptation and trial upon the naked promise of God. That required an act of faith to which they were comparative strangers. How shall the sayings of Jesus be the only stay of these hearts? How shall they prove to be the undergirding principles in the erection of character? How? The authority and confidence of a personal experience in the things of God were the means.

And now the words which had been read,

and, indeed, committed to memory, took on new forms of love and power. Words which once seemed beautiful were now forceful. Invitations and promises which once were dull and meaningless were now wrought into pure gold.

The plan for accomplishing the end was this: The promises of God to his own children were classified. Such as related to bereavement and trial and personal affliction were dwelt upon daily. One of these sublime promises would be made the theme of meditation for a certain day, and at the family gathering in the evening the thoughts which had sprung up in the minds would be mentioned. The following day the effort would be repeated, but with a different promise. O what new joy was theirs, as in prayer each was entitled to an inheritance in those wonderful words, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so the Lord comforteth his people;" or yet that other precious morsel, "In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence alone did lead them."

The key of joy hung at the girdle of the least, and the store-house of abundant blessing was reached by all without price—without molestation.

“When sorrows come, they come not single
spies,
But in battalions.”

CHAPTER X.

VARIED EXPERIENCES.

“When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
But in battalions.”

THE earliest settlements of the beautiful and romantic town of Bridgeton were made about the year 1768. For many years it had had the ordinary fortunes of most inland towns. Starting with the cabin of the Simpson brothers, it gradually acquired strength until it became a large-sized village. The population was at no time large, and usually variable. The people were well-to-do, but had only slight desires for education. A few manufacturing enterprises had been projected by Lawson and others, and an influx of mechanics from the eastern counties had given somewhat of a business air to the place.

An extensive and productive farming community was lying adjacent to the town upon the east and north, and, at no great distance, the fair fields of Madison's Cove waved their rich and golden harvests. Bridgeton was the

chief outlet to this agricultural region, and became in time, through its shipments of grains and other produce eastward, a desirable place in which to live.

Some time prior to the organization of the firm of Ransom & Austin, the great line of communication to the Western States and territories was opened up. The singular passage over the great Alleghanies by rail, and the broad and fertile prairies of the West being free to all, it was evident that Bridgeton must, by accident of location, become famous. The tide of emigration set in steadily toward the setting sun. Driving back the aborigines of the country, the irrepressible whites knew no mercy. In addition, iron was found in large quantities along the ridges and spurs of the mountains. Indeed, the town was built upon an immense bed of this valuable metal. Rich mines of bituminous coal were also discovered in the immediate vicinity. These trade openings attracted a large number of miners to the region. A few capitalists were also forthcoming, so that, all in all, the spirit of enterprise began to manifest itself in every direction. This prosperity had not continued long until a rival town, a few miles distant, began to assert its

right to recognition. Out of the bog sprang Kieptrieste. Falling heir to certain great railroad industries, and projected upon a grand scale, the town rose as by magic. It was not substantially nor elegantly built, nor yet was it a desirable place to reside, but it was a town of no mean proportions and of great vitality. In proportion as Kieptrieste advanced Bridgeton suffered. The mechanics and other laborers moved thither in large numbers.

The proposition of Mr. Austin to remove the "Argus" to Kieptrieste did not meet with the approval of his partner, and was, also, checkmated by the opinions of some of the leading citizens. To add to this despondent condition of things, Austin was evidently doing badly. He had, contrary to the wishes of his friend, made the acquaintance of some men of fashion from Philadelphia, who were in the habit of spending the summer months in the mountains. Unconsciously, almost, he had been led to neglect his religious meetings; unconsciously he was losing moral power. For years he had been enthusiastically devoted to religion. But the charm was broken. The Sabbath was not that sweet day of spiritual rest and refreshment it had formerly been. It was more a

day of pleasure. His readings upon that day were more of an intellectual than of a religious character. He stood aloof from the friends of religion. The secret "conclave" and the ceremonies of the "Order" meetings were much more desirable than the fellowship meetings at the house of the Lord.

To Ransom this was a deep grief. He knew the character of his partner's early habits and tendencies. He knew also what gracious deliverances had been wrought out for him by prayer. And now for him to forsake his good habits was altogether too trying. Then, he was partially responsible for the marriage of Austin and his sister, as it was through his invitation that the visit was made through which the first meeting was had. How he turned away with scorn from the men—devils incarnate—who were working out the destruction of his old college mate!

The visits of Ransom and his eldest daughter at the home of Austin became much more frequent than formerly. The sore trial through which Laura was passing called forth their most earnest sympathies.

"Laura," said Byrne, one day, as they were seated in the house of the latter, "Laura, you

distress me. Something seems to be troubling you, and I must know what it is. I must know the whole of it. Don't keep any thing back."

"Byrne, my health is not perfect by any means; and I am troubled about Theodore. He is so different from what he once was. Really, I didn't think it was in a man to change so much in so short a time."

"I have noticed a change lately," said Byrne; "and it is causing me sleepless nights. And what to do I do not know."

"Yes, he keeps such very late hours. And while I ought not to say it, perhaps, I will say it to you. His love for me is changed. Those Mannings and De Groats are ruining him. If he would stop now he might recover. But, Byrne, if he goes on in this line much longer there can be no salvation."

"What shall be done?" said the brother.

"Well! he seems infatuated. I believe the only way to remedy the evil is for us to move away from town. How would that do?"

"I hadn't thought of that, and it would interfere with our plans greatly; but whatever is for the best I will consent to."

"Suppose I propose to him the idea of mov-

ing West. That would break up all these wicked associations."

"The West will, in time, be the center of American influence and power. Thousands are looking that way, and the tide from abroad is likely to set in from all directions."

"Well, I have prayed to God to open up some way for us to get away from here. There are so many doors to vice here that I almost shudder to think of it. And then, you know, Theodore is so easily led."

"I am sure I am praying for you. God says that in all our ways we should acknowledge him and he will direct our steps."

"How it is possible for some men to live off the hard earnings of others, to rejoice over the downfall of their neighbors, to entrap them in the net of sin, I cannot understand. And how our government can license these dreadful saloons and hotels is truly wonderful."

"That is so! But dreadful is not strong enough a word. They are horrible! What right has one man to take away the money of another unless he gives him a true equivalent. But these beer and whisky men, who are too lazy to work for a living, are like so many vultures pouncing down upon their prey."

"I tell you if we women could have our say we would make short work of it. The idea of preaching 'revenue' to us from licenses! Don't it cost the government ten thousand fold more in the course of a year than it gets into the treasury?"

"Yes; and prayer for others seems to do but little good when the temptation is thrown into the face of them all the time."

"It is perfectly absurd in the government, and a constant violation of every law of right to the citizen. And these saloon keepers and tavern men, the idea of their being classed among our respectable people is a little too bad. Look at Badger, driving his fast horses, and entertaining the great citizens or officers of the county! No. Let them till the soil, buy and sell lawful goods, get gain as best they may in honor, and then we will respect them. I must confess that when I get thinking about it I get furious."

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Theodore, who, in his good-humored way, told the story of how Tom Manning had been fleeced out of a hundred dollars by a patent-right agent.

It was a gloomy day when Theodore Austin

and his family took their departure for Western wilds. He fought the idea for a considerable while, but his wife prevailed. The dissolution of the co-partnership was a hard trial. He had yielded under a strong pressure, being advised to the change by his father, who had lately visited him, and who had been grieved at his condition. The sale of his personal property had not netted him much, and when the debts were all paid he did not have much money remaining. He had wakened up to his true condition almost too late. It was with him as when in sleep one seeks to fly from some danger but seems helpless. At last, in a prodigious effort at escape, the eyes open and the nerves are in a tremor. So *he* fled for safety, and the violence of the effort brought him to sanity and salvation. We cannot follow him through the vicissitudes of his political life in the West, but must say that, as in many other instances of deliverance from the curse of inebriety, the flight was the early step which led to fortune. To this sudden change in business affairs must be added the great losses endured by Mr. Ransom by the flood which deluged the larger part of Bridgeton in the autumn of 18—, as well as the fire

by which his beautiful home was laid in ashes. The outlook was not agreeable. Frank Ransom was a youth in whom the heart of his father could confide. He had given such attention to the cultivation of his mind as put him abreast of the young men older than himself. As a partner he became especially helpful. Indeed, he assumed with tact and energy the entire business during the two terms of his father as representative in Congress. He superintended the rebuilding of his father's premises, cared for the interests of the family, and gave a strong impulse to the subscription list of the paper.

Guy Ransom seemed to have his heart upon ocean life. It called to the father's remembrance his own singular taste in early life, and, although opposed in spirit to the plan, he at last gave his consent. "If my son," he said, "shall in any wise help up sailor-life into something sweeter and better by an ennobling example, or by his words or deeds, he shall go. If God uses him for that class of neglected men of the deep, then I shall not oppose with my judgment what has been dictated by my prayers." Guy became a midshipman. The sequel shows that in this life there was not simply promo-

tion, but such a spirit of devotion to the interests of the sailors, that, at three ports at least, homes were built for their temporary accommodation and libraries established through his instrumentality.

Oscar Ransom was a black-haired, black-eyed, dark-featured lad, into whose sunny face it was pleasant to look. He was but six when his mother died, and he knew but little of the blessings he had obtained through transmission. This was the preacher-boy in prospect, since the parents in turn had each, by prayer, consecrated him to the work of saving souls.

Fred Ransom, the youngest, completed the circle of boys. But how changed was Grassmere! The new home was cozy and pleasant in all of its appointments, and the same spirit of harmony pervaded the place as formerly, but there were broken links which could only be made whole by the reunions of the "better country." The sweetest voice of all had been hushed in death. Still it was home, and the visits of friends and of strangers were occasions of joy and profit.

“Turning things to account.”

CHAPTER XI.

AN EPISODE.

“Turning things to account.”

DID RIGBY was a notable character in Bridgeton society. For many years he had been going in and out before the people of that ancient borough, claiming to be the oldest white citizen in the place. He had a good name for telling stories, and usually kept in a jolly good humor the crowds at the various taverns where he got his grog. A few of his stories were founded on historical data; most of them, however, were the creatures of his fanciful brain. But these stories had been told over and over again until he was willing to swear to their correctness night or day, Sunday or Monday.

The one man who was able to trip him up in his attenuated “yarns” was Dan Mals-ton, a quick-witted, agreeable old fellow, whose parents were among the first settlers. They had moved to Bridgeton a few months prior to the Indian massacre, and were of the company

who had been driven to the mountains. His Uncle Toby hauled the logs to build Fort Fetter, which stood at the north-western extremity of the town. He was also present at the foundation laying of the little old courthouse, near the Diamond. It was difficult to catch Old Dan, as he was familiarly called, napping in any adventure of the early settlers.

When Did would get into the midst of one of his wild, weird stories of the earlier times, Malston would be sure to get him into a deadlock before he would go far, by some fatal question he would ask him. Old Uncle Ben was deemed the umpire, and happily reconciled the differences. If the whole truth had been known, Ben was the most reliable oracle of the neighborhood, albeit of late his memory had failed. He had been in the employ of Nathaniel Ransom's brother when there were only five houses within a radius of that many miles.

The aforesaid Rigby was the village schoolmaster. He had taught at Karson and Blackmere and elsewhere throughout the county, and had not until of late aspired to one of the more important schools of Bridgeton. Through the influence of some of his friends, and especially by his own glowing statements

of his success in this work, he had impressed the honorable school board of his competency in that direction. "My talents and my age," he would say, "entitle me to one of your schools." He was at this time snugly ensconced at ten dollars per month, with the privilege of "boarding round."

His appearance had made much against him. He was a little dried-up fellow, with red hair, of a nervous temperament, of sluggish speech, and, as the boys put it, "bare-footed on the top of his head and tied his teeth in with a string."

Now the school board were quite careful of the appearance of their teachers; and, if they weren't so very intelligent, they had to be good looking at least. If Rigby had only known all the secrets he might have made a better impression upon their minds. A pair of gold spectacles and a shiny wig might have helped his cause. Of his intellectual capabilities it was hard to pass upon. A smattering of information he had, and, as he was wont to say, "Never was there a master who had such a passion for governing children like I have."

It is due the Bridgeton boys and girls to say that it was difficult to find out just ex-

actly what the old man meant when he tried to explain things out of the books. As to his claim for governing, there was nothing in it. He was an old bachelor, and knew about as much of controlling the young as a Hottentot knows of teaching morals. His habits were not of the best order. When he would be out at the apple wagons the boys would lift up his desk lid to see the long line of old tobacco quids which had been chewed over and over again and now put out to dry. They at times found also a flask of old rye underneath a pile of books. Taking it all in all, if it had not been for the little bread and butter in the business Rigby had never become famous, nor the Bridgeton boys chargeable with so much evil. There was one feature of the old schoolmaster's character, however, which ought not to be passed in silence, namely, his love for, and his power in, handling the rod. Here he was a general. None had any respect for his authority until it was enforced by the use of the rod. At the beginning of each term the boys and girls agreed among themselves that they would never cross him in one of his gloomy moods. They knew full well that if they ever got him thoroughly aroused he

would commence at the head of the class and whip every one, boys and girls, in order to get the guilty party. "I'll get the right fellow, that I will," was his usual reply to mischief.

The old school-house was a renowned place. Here had flourished, each in their turn, many knights of the ferrule and rod, as well as some real disciples of learning. There was the eccentric and cunning wag of a master, Hezekiah Mickle, who always held stiff reins, and was a sort of prophet withal. The first of those who bore rule in the town school was known alone in memory. His grave upon the brow of the hill near at hand was unmarked except by a common stone, and the cows of the neighborhood wandered over it every day. Rude neglect was all the reward he seemed to have.

Then came Horace O'Kelly. Fresh from ould Ireland, his claim to scientific knowledge was great, but hardly substantiated by facts. Some of his expositions of the Scriptures at morning reading were models in their way (?). His words of blarney generally carried him through, though, and he was regarded as a clever fellow until he left the town one night

owing all the shop-keepers who had given him credit.

Next came the sweet-spirited Jones, the bachelor Hughes, the witty Thomas, the scholarly Radnor, all with distinctive characteristics and years of effort.

To sketch the lives and doings of many of the boys and girls who at times were pupils, and, perchance, got their first inspiration for knowledge within those old walls, would be a pleasant task. The reminiscences of the old place were delightful. As much might also be said of its surroundings. Nature had come to the rescue, and had done for it what the careless citizens had left undone. A tiny stream flowed near by, dancing onward in the sunlight. Beyond the narrow bridge which spanned it there was a beautiful bluff covered with shrubbery and evergreens, which with its dog-wood trees, gave it in autumn its brightest touches. Then there was the dusty old turnpike leading to Blackmere, with its Conestoga wagons and jolly teamsters.

In this quiet place, and under the tutorship of Did Rigby, the Ransom children had either been, or were now being, educated. It was not much of a school, at all events, but the

best that could be had under existing circumstances. A large class of young ladies had been formed at the commencement of Rigby's administration, some of whom were in and others had turned their "teens." They were a little unmanageable. Nan Ransom was one of the number. None of the young misses could bear their tutor, which seemed wicked. "But he is so sickening," Nan would say. "What on earth does he mean, anyhow, trying to make love to us? I despise it, and unless there is a change, and that soon, there'll be a rupture here. The old, rickety genius is almost ready for the grave, and as ugly and as proud as Lucifer. What does he mean?"

Matters got worse and worse. The girls determined that they would leave the school instant. Accordingly, at recess of a Friday morning the ten young ladies packed up their books and slates and marched out of the school-house without saying a word. A little note lying upon the teacher's desk was the only explanation given. It read as follows:

"MR. D. RIGBY:

"SIR: We have resolved to leave your school in a body this afternoon. Our reasons

for so doing are two : first, we are convinced, by long observation, that you are wholly incompetent as a teacher ; and, secondly, your conduct toward us has become unbearable. No words of yours can gain our respect."

This curt epistle was signed by the girls. When the old man wiped off his spectacles and read the paper he was dumbfounded. The silence of the girls, and, above all, their eyes flashing fire as they passed out of the door, spoke forcibly of their determination. The deed was done, and it was beyond recall. He rose from his chair, the meanwhile his cheeks becoming crimson and white, walked to the stove, and thrust the incendiary document into the fire. For the boys it was a huge joke. They were privy to the transaction, and were meditating the same thing. But, deeming discretion the better part of valor, and not wishing to fire the ire of the teacher any more, they maintained a respectful and dignified silence, amusing themselves with side glances at one another as his back was turned toward them.

"What can be done?" muttered Rigby after school was dismissed. "This is, no

doubt, the winding up of my career here. And just got fairly started, too! This is dreadful, dreadful! These girls are out of the best families in town, and in less than one hour the news will be all over the place. What shall be done?"

The news of the girls having left was, as their teacher supposed, soon noised abroad. It created somewhat of a sensation. It was a bold move, and without precedent.

"Nannie," said Mr. Ransom at the tea-table, "what is this I hear about your leaving school? I saw your whole class pass the office early this afternoon, and you seemed excited and were talking loud. What is the matter?"

"Well, papa, we were excited. We came down upon our teacher, it may be, a little too hard; but then he is such a consummate dunce that we couldn't stand it any longer, and we, every one of us, quit school."

"Quit the school?"

"Yes, papa, we did. We bore the matter as long as we could, and without complaint. But Mr. Rigby is so conceited and so vain and so overbearing that we couldn't stand it a day longer. Why, papa, the old dunce actually

tried to make love to one of the girls. We just met together last week and resolved that if he gave us just one more provocation we would leave in a body. So yesterday he tried to kiss Mame Haskill, and to-day we did leave. We were all very sorry to do it, but how could we do any other way and preserve our self-respect?"

"O, you were too hasty, Nan. I know the old man has a great many singular ways, but young people ought to look over some things. And as to his advances, the better plan would have been to give information to the school directors. But by acting in this way you give him no chance to improve."

"Papa, the girls were all a unit, and they said the School Board knew he was incompetent when they employed him. They removed Mr. Pomeroy, a most excellent teacher, just to gratify the old man's vanity and to please his old friend, Mr. Morrison, who recommended him."

"Daughter, I'm really distressed about this matter. You know that I am a member of the Board, and to think that my own child should be mixed up in the matter is too bad."

"Mr. Thoburn's daughters are in it, and he

is president of the Board. Nel Thoburn wrote the note."

"Note? What note? Did you write a note?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was there any impertinence in it?"

"No, sir. We just told him that we thought him incapable of teaching such a school, and that his conduct toward us was unbearable. That's all."

"Why, dear, did you sign that paper? Don't you think the girls would return?"

"I am afraid they will not. They are all very determined."

A sharp rap at the door interrupted the conversation.

"Good evening, Mr. Rigby."

"Good evening, sir."

"A pleasant evening, sir."

"Quite pleasant."

"How are you pleased with Bridgeton?"

"Very well, sir."

"And with your school?"

"Only tolerably well, sir. We had a little rupture there to-day. Several of the young ladies deliberately took up their books and walked out of the room."

"So I have learned. I am sorry you have gotten into a tangle. But how did it happen?"

"The story is almost too long to go over entirely. But the girls were too fast and too headstrong."

"Do you have an idea that they are in real earnest in this matter?"

"Yes, indeed. The letter indicated that."

"Don't you think we could dissuade them from their course?"

"Perhaps so."

"They have all attained that age when it is impossible to use any thing but moral suasion with them, and if they are bent on the matter I suppose we shall have to make the most of it. It's bad enough at all events—bad for the town, bad for the teacher, bad for the girls."

"That's just what I think, Mr. Ransom."

An hour or more was spent in endeavoring to light upon a plan by which the breach might be healed. When Mr. Rigby went home it was with the foreshadowing that "his days were numbered."

No persuasion could move the purpose of the girls. They declared that it was "no

school at all for them unless they had another teacher."

The School Board at its next meeting, finding still further trouble brewing, and fearing a similar outbreak among the boys, resolved to continue Mr. Rigby only until the end of the term, and adopted measures immediately for the building of a new school-house and a prospective change of teachers.

In the mean time the fruitful brain of Mr. Ransom had projected and carried forward a new plan of education. He resigned his position on the Board with a view of organizing, if possible, a school of a higher and better grade. He led off in a strong subscription for the erection of a building in the southern part of the town, to be known as the "Bridgeton Male and Female Institute."

The citizens rallied to the enterprise. A good corps of teachers was employed, the surrounding towns sent a number of pupils, and the whole project became an eminent success. The unpleasantness at the old school-house, instead of being an unmixed evil, resulted in the founding of one of the best institutions of learning in all the region traversed by the Juniata. It stands to-day a memorial

of the wise foresight and thoughtful consecration of Mr. Byrne Ransom. Year after year classes varying from ten to thirty are graduated as scholars and enter the ranks of the brain-workers of the age. The benign influence of the Institute on the town through all the widening future cannot be calculated ; but on such noble educational institutions as this the strength of our country largely depends.

“The attempt

Is all the wedge that splits its knotty way
Betwixt the possible and the impossible.”

CHAPTER XII.

DIFFICULT ACHIEVEMENTS.

“The attempt
Is all the wedge that splits its knotty way
Betwixt the possible and the impossible.”

THE manufacturing enterprises at Bridgeton, of which mention has been made, had drawn thither a large number of foreigners from England, Ireland, and Germany. Among the motley crowds which were quartered in the tenement houses along the “basin” were a number of rude and ignorant Romanists. The worship of Mary, the worship of the saints, the requirements of the confessional, and the tyranny of the priesthood were all well-known factors in their religion and matters of ridicule and detestation by Protestants. Politically, Mr. Ransom had hitherto wielded a strong influence over these ignorant and self-conceited voters. The clear-headed opinions which he was ever free to proclaim were not without weight in causing many to cast away their foreign notions, to change their

political sentiments, and to become more closely and heartily identified with American institutions. Many of these foreigners were in the habit of sending their sons and daughters to the public schools, notwithstanding the violent protests of the Catholic clergy. Whatever of influence Mr. Ransom possessed he determined should be used in the effort to make these parties independent thinkers in matters of religion and personal duty.

From boyhood he had been connected with a Protestant Church, and had been nurtured under its gracious influences. He owed much to the power of Christian sympathy which was ever manifested by his people; much to the social means of grace to which he had been so closely attached; much to his own matured experience in grace, covering many years of his life. Love and duty were thrilling words, hope in Christ for guilty men a joyous watchword.

The work of directing the Catholic mind into a new channel of influences presented indeed many barriers. The prejudices of Romanists against all forms of faith except their own were so deeply seated as to prevent a beginning. Then the ear at the confessional

was so open and ready to receive any news through the servant-girls concerning work accomplished in this line, that the way was oft-times shut up to further efforts.

Further than this, the current sentiment of his own Church held that little could be done in bringing to a correcter faith those whose minds had been so long perverted. Hope seemed to be greatly deferred. Still he reasoned with himself, “‘Nothing ventured nothing won.’ Shall I sit down in blissful ease and deny the choicest privileges of spiritual joy and power to my fellow-citizens simply from fear of failure? Shall I not make the effort at least to lead this people into the purer experiences of grace, by which they shall know Christ in the fullest remission of sins and the ever-abiding prospects of the great hereafter? Nay! Shall I not seek to indoctrinate them in the will of God by putting into their hands the holy Scriptures. These shall make them wise unto salvation. Light is the one great necessity of the Roman Catholic mind. Under the teachings of God’s holy Word that large and increasing element in American society, instead of becoming a hinderance to true progress, may become a

vigorous help. Patience and perseverance are requisite to success."

The timidity of the membership of his Church in this line of Christian effort made nothing against Ransom's patient and prayerful methods. He soon found that the Catholic mind was far from being an invulnerable thing. He found that sympathy and love were competent in winning many a battle. That a quiet, judicious laying of plans, followed by a distribution of Bibles among the people as well as kind words in reference to personal consecration, gave him special power. If those efforts had been simply to proselytize the people to his own Church he might not have succeeded so well. But he sought rather that they should learn to reverence the Book of books as they did the crucifix, and that they might learn the beautiful doctrine that Jesus is the sinner's only but all-sufficient Friend. To accomplish this would bring a triumph truly golden.

Love led the way—love, a "sun against whose melting beams the winter cannot stand." Many became greatly enamored with the Word, and were able to testify that they trusted Jesus implicitly, without the interven-

tion of "Mary," or any of the "saints." Others, rejoicing in their release from the oppression of the "priestcraft," changed their Church relations, thanked God, and took fresh courage.

It was one of those peevish days in the late autumn, when nature gets void of beauty, and one desires to shut himself up in the quiet of his own home-life, that a loud rap was heard at the door of the office of the "Bridgeton Argus." In an instant, without any permission to enter, a burly, red-eyed, red-nosed, shabbily-dressed fellow came pushing his way into the presence of Editor Ransom.

"Hon. Ransom, I believe," he blurted out.

"My name is Ransom," was the reply.

"Do you mind me?"

"No, sir, I believe not."

"Don't you mind Buster Mason? Many's the time we joked and played together around this y'ere old burg."

"Sylvester Mason, do you mean? Sylvester Mason?"

"Yes, I'm the very fellow you're thinking about."

"Well, well, is that really you? But you have greatly changed, my friend. What is the

matter? You look so old ; getting gray, too. Sit down, and tell me something about your life since last we met. I was thinking about you last week. I wondered what had become of you, and so here you are."

"Well, I'm glad every body has not forgotten a fellow. I've not been in this 'neck-o'-timber' now for going on twenty-five years. I just got in town to-day, and found I was a teetotal stranger. It didn't used to be so."

"No, things change ; men change, too."

"That's so. I picked up a paper this afternoon down at the Fountain Inn, and I looked at it and found it was printed by Byrne Ransom. You print it, don't you?"

"Yes, sir,"

"Wa'll, I thought so. And what I was agoin' to say was this: The ole chap what tends bar down there sed you was the same man what lived here a good many years ago. He said you had got to be a mighty high and lar'nt man 'bout here. Bin to Legislatur and Congress, and I dunno what all he didn't say. I thot I'd come in and scrape up the old acquaintance. No harm dun, I reckon?"

"Not at all, not at all. But where do you hail from? I am always glad to see my old

friends. But I should not have known you at all, Mason, unless you had made yourself known."

"No? The fact is, I don't hail from no-whar in partic'lar. Bin trav'lin round from place to place, sometimes here, sometimes there, sometimes nowhar. You know I never larnt any trade but that of drinkin' whisky. And I have kep' it up all along. I can guzzle down more ole rye than any man can pay fur unless he's got a pocket-book like ole Girard."

"Are you married, Mason?"

"Yes, kind o'."

"Where is your wife?"

"Polly died five years ago. She died in the poor-house out West. As nice an ole woman as the Lord ever made. It's all my fault, though, all my fault."

"Any young children? Where are they?"

"I don't know. I could curse the day when I was born into this y'ere world, and I do curse it near every day. But cursin' don't seem to make things any better."

"Of course it don't make things any better. It makes them worse. Mason, you must reform."

"Ha, ha, reform! That's a good way to talk to an ole fellow like myself. Can't get down to that."

"Yes, you can get down to that. And what is more, you must get down to it or go to eternal ruin. There is help for even you."

"Help for me? Never! There's no help for me."

"Here the voice of Mason began to waver, and he showed signs of breaking down altogether, but he rallied and continued:

"Kind sir, I orter turned that new leaf when you did. I mind all about it. I'm the man you saw in your dream; I'm the man. It don't seem long since that time; but what a life I've had! If I thought it wasn't too late I believe I'd turn round and try to do better yet."

"It is not too late, my friend. Not too late at all. I was just about saying there's mercy for the worst. If so, there must be mercy for you."

"Do yer think you could do any thing for a feller so low as me?"

"I cannot do much, but God and you can. You can do a good deal. Your passion for strong

drink isn't in your blood; it's in your heart's desire. If you want to reform you can reform. To do so, remember, is no child's play. You must nerve yourself for a long and strong battle. The first thing you must do is to sign the total abstinence pledge. Then you must stop associating with men who drink. You must keep out of the tavern and away from the saloon. You must shun the bartender as you would the devil. You must preach total abstinence to others and get the idea firmly fixed in your soul that drinking whisky is a great crime, and the constant use of it creates a diseased thirst. Do you think you can do all that?"

"I dunno. Do yer think that would save a feller?"

"No, I do not think that would save you. You must try prayer. You must tell God the whole story of your life. Make a clean breast of every thing, and keep on praying until you feel you are saved."

"Mercy! I can't do all that! Me pray? Haven't thought of such a thing since I was a little boy. My mother larnt me, 'Now I lay me down to sleep;' but I didn't get any further."

“That is no matter. It is not too late to begin. God will hear you, however broken and lame your words are. Desire is prayer. Your life is too good a thing to throw away in this manner. Let us try and save it. Strong drink will be like a wild beast. It will be like a fire in the bones. You will be driven from post to pillar by your thirst. Your old comrades will try to get you back again to your old seat in the tavern. Your only hope is in flight and prayer. Now, my brother, for one long, bold, and determined strike for liberty! Will you try it?”

“Wall, I’d ’most give the thing up long ago, but if you think I can git all right agin, I’ll try it.”

Here the conversation ended. Business duties called Mr. Ransom away, but with the promise of having another talk over the matter. The subject kept simmering in the minds of both day after day. At the third interview Mason made a definite promise to begin the work of reformation at once. But the giant within him was not to be slain so easily. The details of that honest fight are painful. How often he surrendered to his low desires! How often his boon companions dragged him down

again into the ditch ! How often even prayer seemed unavailing ! But the victory came at length. It was full and complete. From the low, vulgar, drunken tramp there came forth a man clothed and in his right mind. God and a prayerful effort would not succumb to even the fires of a desperate, deep-seated appetite.

Once launched upon the sea of positive Christian effort, this business layman could not bear to oar about the coast, but was anxious to get out into the deep of God's great purposes. This was a venture which could bring no disaster.

Weary with the monotony of the Sunday-school merely as an officer, he went down into the lower walks where men live to sin, and outlined his plans ; thence into the higher walks, where he found much to engage his thought and patience. The lads of many of the families seemed to be going down into ruin on a gallop. Casting aside parental influences, the drinking saloon became a favorite resort, the house of the strange woman another. Our Christian editor consulted with his pastor frequently upon the possibilities of saving the youth of Bridgeton. He received much en-

couragement, for the pastor was deeply interested in the work.

In a central location, in Alleghany-street, he erected a neat frame building, and fitted it up with taste for the purpose of organizing a Youths' Brotherhood. At first the boys were shy of the place and gave it a respectful letting-alone. But the interesting books and papers, the innocent games and pleasant chit-chat, soon won every heart.

Poor Mason, now saved, became president of the Brotherhood, and a right royal leader he was. Some of the prominent gentlemen of the various Churches were frequently called upon to give short talks on "How to do Business;" "Choice of a Pursuit;" "Qualifications for Business;" "Elements of Success;" "Agriculture;" "The Main Question in Living;" etc., etc. The pastors of the town often held short public conversations on subjects related to right living. An occasional entertainment with refreshments served to endear the place to all. The whole plan was so practical, and was worked so admirably, that the "Brotherhood" became a source of great blessing and power in the community. It required some money and patience and time, but the bread

“cast upon the waters” was gathered “after many days.”

Other schemes of beneficence were projected—schemes which only a truth-inspired, love-inflamed, Spirit-guided Christian experience could mature. Money was loaned upon good security, without interest, to certain poor struggling mechanics and day-laborers, which put them on the road to prosperity. Orphans were sought out and provided with homes; widows were aided in their desperate efforts at “getting on” in the world and trying to save their little homes.

During Mr. Ransom’s Congressional career a beautiful incident occurred, which ought not to go unmentioned. The Hon. Preston Barrows, from Alabama, had an only daughter who had become an actress. She had changed her name to Monema Harland, but was known at Washington as the daughter of Mr. Barrows. Her life was out of harmony with the opinions of her parents, albeit they may have been blamed for want of firmness in not forbidding her the early steps. They had looked with much pride upon their daughter when, in the character of some English lady or belle of society, she acted her part in the monthly comedy,

farce or other operatic play of the amateur club of Tuscaloosa. But since the stage had become so attractive, and had stolen from them their only daughter, no burning, sarcastic words could express their contempt for its amusements or its associations. Miss Barrows had utterly discarded the Church of her mother, cared for nothing save the pleasures and gayeties of fashionable life, and deemed religion a dull and juiceless thing.

Messrs. Barrows and Ransom were intimate friends, and boarded with a lady by the name of Sauren. A certain Mr. and Mrs. Goman were boarders at the same house. Mrs. Goman was a woman of gifts. She had a few meritorious traits of character, and was even a member of a Christian Church, but was such a chronic grumbler that her Christian influence was very slight. Her husband never concerned himself about religion, and had imbibed the notion that it wasn't exactly such a good thing as some people said it was. "At least," he would say, "it hasn't revolutionized my wife's nature by a long shot. She is as fond of dress and going to parties as she ever was, and as for fault-finding—saying damaging things about the minister and the members—she is

as good at those things as any outsider I ever saw."

But there were elements in the character of Mrs. Goman which, if brought into exercise, might be made exceedingly useful.

"Miss Barrows must be rescued," said Ransom, "and Mrs. Goman can rescue her if she will."

He approached her through her husband. The nature of Miss Barrows' life was made fully known to him, as well as the purpose to strike for her recovery. Mr. Goman was a man of keen and noble impulses, and at once joined heartily in the proposition. He agreed to talk with his wife upon the subject, and would do whatever was within his reach to second her efforts.

Mrs. Goman was, at first, quite unready to begin the work. She thought it a little beneath her dignity, and a kind of compromise of her womanhood. But she remembered her husband's burning criticism about religion "not being worth much, except to sit in a cushioned seat in church and to hear an eloquent sermon." A sense of honor to her profession of religion urged her to duty. She would try.

"Miss Harland is not at home," were the pert words of the servant girl at the brown stone front on — street. "She is out of town."

"Will you please give her this package when she returns, with the compliments of Mrs. Goman and Mrs. Sauren?" said the callers.

"I will," and the door closed abruptly.

"Well," said Mrs. Goman, "that's a falsehood."

"I haven't the least doubt of it," replied Mrs. Sauren, as the two walked hastily down the street.

"I wonder if that girl didn't know us? I think I have met her in the market sometimes."

"Perhaps she did. She seemed rather confused."

"Yes, she did, and the manner in which she disposed of us was peculiar."

"Quite so."

Within the house a strange scene occurred. When the servant delivered the package to Miss Barrows she went into a private room and opened it. It contained a beautiful photograph of her childhood home in the South,

a lot of toy tea-plates, cups and saucers, a tiny looking-glass, a doll, and a few other play-things. They were not new to her eyes. They were relics of her earlier years.

“Mercy! what does all this mean? she exclaimed, and as she kept unrolling the bundle a letter dropped out addressed to Miss Sophie Barrows, Washington, D. C. She hurriedly broke the seal and read :

“MY DEAR SISTER: We are strangers to each other now, but I trust we will yet be friends. Your present life is a great disappointment to your parents, and a source of very great grief. Since the day you left your home in the sunny South they have not ceased to pray for you. That sad expression of countenance your father wears as he attends to the duties of his position has in it a secret meaning. The smiles which play upon the face of your dear mother are forced smiles. Night and day her desires are upon you. It is not my intention to endeavor to prove how demoralizing the theater is in its several relations to society. All I wish to say is, that if you abandon your present life and throw your heart and influence in favor of Christianity,

you will find life to be a very different thing to what it is now. The little mementos which I send you will remind you of happier hours. They call to memory the beautiful and simple life of your girlhood. When surrounded by loving associations your happinesses were multiplied day by day.

“How changed are things to-day! Now the darkness is over your head. No golden beams of heavenly grace enter your soul. Casting away the comforts of the Christian hope, you cast away all. And yet along the horizon I can see the glimmerings of light. God's great remedy for sin is sufficient for all our necessities. That remedy is the blood of Jesus. It cleanses the foulest. It washes away the guilt. It is a portion that is free for all. My dear girl, let me recommend to you the loving Lord.

“I have inclosed a few pages of tracts, and a book entitled ‘The Blood of the Cross.’ Please give them a diligent reading. Write me the state of your feelings, and believe me in confidence to be

“Very truly yours,

“HARRIET GOMAN.”

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the reader. "Such nonsense as that!" and, with a curl of the lip, she tossed the package into a closet, and commenced getting ready for the evening ball. "She must think me a great fool to give up all my worldly pleasures and sit down as a recluse and sing and pray my life-time away. Not I!"

Thus the girl mused and muttered. The dance that night was, however, not quite so enjoyable as usual. The contents of the letter were almost forgotten, but those playthings of her childhood brought visions of more innocent times.

Mrs. Goman was a woman of great tenacity of purpose. She never minced matters, and usually went first of all to the main point. She believed in being true to the adage which the men were always flinging at her sex that—

"When a woman will she will, you may depend on't,
And if she wont she wont, and that's the end on't."

During the whole of the winter months she thought of but little, in a Christian way, except the ransoming of that brilliant young lady. And it was not labor lost.

As with quiet and determined steps she pur-

sued her ; as with clippings of prose and poetry she brought to her attention the necessity of an immediate and unconditional surrender to truth ; as with conversation and letters and the aid of others she grouped about the girl the ministries of love, Miss Barrows began to show signs of yielding. At last the golden hour came. Sophia Barrows quit the stage, returned to her father's home, became the pride of her parents, and a good and useful Christian. She never knew the fountain-source of her recovery, nor did it matter to Mr. Ransom, since the end was gained, and in such a worthy manner. The reactionary influences, however, upon his friend, Mrs. Goman, in making her a more hopeful and cheery Christian and in enlarging the sphere of her acting, all of which were part of the original plan in the effort to save Miss Barrows, fulfilled in their own good time the wise words of the book : " He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

Oscar Ransom was spending his vacation with his father at Washington. He was pastor of a small congregation in Pittsburgh, and was deemed a young man of much promise.

Oscar's father thought he had discovered in him of late a restlessness in his work which, like an entering wedge, might drive him into some secular business. The May-day excursion to Mount Vernon was principally in the interests of Oscar's pleasure. To it were invited Mr. and Mrs. Barrows and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Goman, the Rev. Dr. Selden, and the Hon. Mr. Sloan, chief of the Agricultural Bureau.

The day of the excursion was bright and golden. The early sunrise, the picturesque scenery, the sail upon the Potomac, and the brilliant company, made up a most delightful occasion.

Dr. Selden was a versatile scholar, and an attractive conversationalist. Oscar Ransom was an attentive listener as the doctor, Mr. Sloan, and Mr. Ransom discussed the various phases of social life, and the relation of the Church to the same. When the question narrowed itself to the responsibilities of public religious teachers, he became doubly interested.

"Dr. Selden," said Mr. Ransom, "what do you think is the great want of the American pulpit to-day?"

"That is a difficult question to answer," re-

plied Dr. Selden. "From a somewhat extended observation, however, I should say what we most need is, a divine baptism of courage—deeper plowing both in the pulpit and in personal contact with men. Goodish preaching is not what society needs. Platitudes and pretty essays seem much out of order in the place where stood a Martin Luther or a John Wesley."

"I heartily agree with you, doctor," said Mr. Sloan. "In agriculture you know the best crops come not from fields which have had scanty touches of the plowshare. Sub-soiling is with us a prime necessity. I believe that the soil of the heart needs a deep plowshare."

To this Dr. Selden said: "We are living in evil times! Men do not consider as they should their individual accountability. They must face the great moral questions of honesty, sobriety, integrity. They must, indeed, be put into harmony with an 'undivorceable conscience,' an 'unescapable God,' an 'inerasable past.'"

"Yes," said Mr. Ransom, "and the pulpit should speak out without fear. We shall sink into an awful barbarism unless we have courage somewhere."

"I believe," returned Dr. Selden, "that the Sunday words from the pulpit should make men pay their honest debts on Monday, and stay out of debt on Tuesday, and, for that matter, every other day. Those words should make a true yard-stick and a full measure. They should make men respect their promise as they do an oath; bear the scoffs and jeers of others; bear honest burdens for the Church with readiness of spirit; make them liberal with their money; make them better husbands, fathers, citizens."

"I am beginning," said Mr. Sloan, "to look with alarm upon the manner in which professedly Christian lawyers will advocate causes which they know to be wrong, and will present licenses to the courts for the privilege of selling strong drink! I am also alarmed when I see professedly Christian physicians who will recommend the use of alcoholic stimulants, and refuse to identify themselves with certain great movements looking to the abolition of intemperance! I am amazed to see how easily mechanics who are members of the Church can be persuaded to work on the Lord's day on the plea that they will be discharged by the corporations!"

"The truth," said Dr. Selden, "is no doubt the great conserving power. I have great faith in it. It is the only thing that can revolutionize society."

"Those fields yonder, gentlemen," added Mr. Sloan, "teach us something. Nature is never whimsical. The farmer never gets into difficulty in the use of grain. Wheat must produce wheat, and corn, corn. And so the living word from the lips of the living teacher is the God-ordained means of saving sinful men."

"Exactly so," replied Dr. Selden. "The stalk formation illustrates getting strength to withstand evil; casting the roots downward to gather richness from divine grace. The blade teaches us to exercise in generous doing—giving liberally to God—reading the holy Scriptures, and suffering patiently for doing well. The full corn represents that symmetrical and well-rounded life which we often see in the Church. These come from good seed-sowing."

Mrs. Goman, who had become interested in the conversation, said pleasantly: "Yes, gentlemen, and God always pays his servants well for any good they may do. Every word spoken to enforce the Saviour's teachings; every

effort to cheer the despondent; every hymn sung or prayer offered at the bedside of the dying; every effort to bless children; every venture in Christian literature; every kind act to the poor, or word or smile or deed done for Jesus' sake, will have its reward. Beyond the deeper plowing and the better sowing are the white fields of eternity's harvest."

When the party landed at Washington Oscar Ransom said to his father, "Father, I am greatly indebted to you for this trip. And, although I did not feel at liberty to enter into the conversation on the way up the river, I must say it seemed very opportune, for, I confess, I have had some severe temptations lately. I think I can trust myself in the line of teaching truth till I die. I want you to pray for me, that I may be more faithful in my work."

“Trusting in Christ is wealth and power and happiness.”

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CAPSTONE.

“Trusting in Christ is wealth and power and happiness.”

WHEN the war for the preservation of the Union broke out Mr. Ransom had reached a ripe old age ; nevertheless physically he was vigorous.

America, in her history, growth, and free institutions, had been to him ever a study and a delight. Her native resources, prolific soil, varied climate, ambitious and toiling people, had long been the envy of other lands. The genius of her laws and civilization was felt to be the harbinger of more splendid triumphs.

The flag to him was a symbol of freedom and equality. The blue field, with its beautiful constellation, was but the counterpart of the beautiful heavens above ; and the stripes, alternate red and white, the exponent of a blood-bought motto, “Many in one.”

During Calhoun’s time in the national Congress he had stood against the pestilent dogma of “State Rights,” as interpreted by that

bold Fire-eater. He had pleaded eloquently for the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. He had predicted evil to the country unless there should come a great change in Southern sentiment. He had advocated prudence and temperance in the discussion of the great questions.

His editorials and speeches were of a temperate and thoroughly loyal type. He demanded the salvation of the Union as a thing to be maintained at every hazard.

"America," he said, "is the land of a special providence. No natural barriers separate these States, no political line of hostility must be made between them. The people speak a common tongue—a tongue destined to be the language of the world. No spirit of monarchy has ever cursed us; the genius of our every institution points to liberty for all.

"If the power of caste is broken our career will be one of unexampled prosperity. God alone can tell what will be the issue of this trouble which is now bursting upon us. The South seems to prefer an arbitration by the sword. This is dreadful! We ought to be one people; we have a common ancestry, a common history, and common laws; and yet between us

is an awful gulf! The South has intrenched herself behind a venerable but wicked institution. She has challenged the government to say whether slavery shall be local or national. She is bold and jubilant. Her hour is at hand! The Confederacy, Minerva-like, has sprung into existence full-armed, of commanding presence, and seeking recognition in the family of nations. It has organized a congress, issued a currency, created an army and navy, and is calling its sons to the rescue. Richmond is the center.

“Mr. Lincoln calls for troops to maintain the existence of the government originated by our fathers.

“When nations appeal to arms for the sake of empire, or to simply adjust geographical boundaries, or to gratify personal ambitions, so that men are driven to the sword and saber, as sheep are driven to the shambles, then, indeed, is ‘War the son of Hell, and splendid murder.’

“But when men gird themselves in defense of their inalienable rights, and unsheathe the sword in behalf of their country’s life, then good men may march to the field, and God will ordain the victory. To die in such a cause

as is presented now is real glory, for there are 'things better than life.'"

Such were the characteristic words of the patriotic old man, as at the depot the first soldiers started for the seat of war. Two of his own sons, Oscar and Guy, were in that company. Too old for this service himself, his influence was constantly exerted in the matter of enlistments.

The wound in the national heart was not easily stanchd. Battle followed battle. Call succeeded call. Homes were desolated, fortunes consumed. The unwritten story of those bloody battles was of stranded lives, blighted hopes, tears, groans, mental and bodily anguish, demoralization, defeat. It seemed as if heaven itself had thrust down the goodly country, even to complete destruction, so as to raise up a better nation.

It was during the great Peninsular campaign in Virginia, when thousands were falling victims to disease and death in the Chickahominy swamps, that an extraordinary pressure was made upon the Christian Commission for helpers. The cry was so sympathetic, and the appeal so powerful, that Mr. Ransom, old as he was, volunteered in the cause. His daughters

were quite unwilling to give their consent. They declared "that the undertaking was too hazardous for an old man; then, too, two boys out of the family were already in the service. It will be impossible for father to stand the work."

But duty pointed in that direction, and, being possessed of a steadfast purpose, the protests were of no avail.

Soon after his arrival at the seat of operations the seven days' fighting commenced, known as the "Battle of the Wilderness." At last the celebrated movement to Harrison's Landing was made by the national troops.

During the last day of the retreat, while bearing supplies to some wounded veterans lying upon the field, he was overwhelmed with the heat. Sitting down at a spring of very cold water he drank freely, and applied water to his head. A violent pain seized his head in the region of the eyes, and a mysterious blindness fell upon him. In this critical situation he was borne from the field. The physician, upon examination, thought that he must lose his sight entirely. In less than a fortnight he was totally blind. Colonel Ransom telegraphed his sisters the facts, and stated

that he would start homeward as soon as his father was able to travel.

When the train moved into Bridgeton the little old depot was filled with people. His arrival partook more of the nature of an ovation than any thing else. His life-long services in the town of his nativity, his interest in all classes of people, and his unconquerable love of country, had endeared him to all. What less could they do than honor his coming! what less than cheer him even in the hour of affliction! A kind Providence had raised him above the need of poverty, so that they could not lend him temporal aid; but good wishes, prayers, and the like were forthcoming from all. His children were enthusiastic in their attachment to their father, and were willing to sacrifice any personal good for his pleasure.

Have you ever seen of a summer morning ominous signs in the heavens? The sunrise, indistinct with its quickening beams, playing hide-and-seek with the passing clouds? Now the storm-girt powers getting the advantage, and now the sunlight gleaming through the rifts? Have you seen, then, the clouds dissolved, the day radiant with blessing, and the calm, quiet

sunset of the evening? Such is the story of this pure and truthful life—such its morning, its noontide, its evening.

Father Ransom is a jubilant old man. His lips are not poisoned nor his temper soured by aught that has crossed his path either in the early or later hours. Forced into a condition of blindness by the violence of his love for others, he bewails not his fate nor charges the heavenly Father with unwise doing. As he sits in his rustic chair he welcomes all who visit him, and is often heard to say:

“A rugged way
Sometimes has led me through misfortune’s vales,
Yet His sure word and grace have been my stay,
Whose promise never fails.
In prayer and trust I’ll wait
On life’s dim threshold;
Free from doubts and fear.”

“Perhaps the generous God,” he says, “has some little gleanings for me to do in the whitened fields before the evening star. To walk this remnant of my way without eyes, and be dependent upon others for the commonest blessings, is no mean affliction. But God knows the way I take. I must not follow in the wake of the worldling, who curses his bit—”

ter fate in the day of trial, and has no loving laugh of gratitude in the days of sunshine. I must not be as the skeptic, receiving the ills of life with a stolid stoicism, and declaring that the Disposer of human destinies is both whimsical and conscienceless. I must study the story of human suffering, the heroes of history who have been called on to suffer rather than to do the will of God, and who are worthy exemplars for me to follow. That supreme chapter of suffering, the lifetime of the Christ, is peculiarly touching and sublime, if I could only meditate upon it aright."

Nan Ransom has found her real life-work at last. She is the guiding evangel of her dear father—a medium of information and blessing. She is his constant companion. Although her tastes in reading are not altogether in the line of her father's, she gladly surrenders, and enters upon fields of information which are interesting and profitable to him.

The large and varied library at the Bridgeton Institute is brought into requisition, and is made the servant of weary hours. Excursions into the fields and woods are of frequent occurrence. Occasional trips to the sea-shore are times of unmingled pleasure.

The visits of cultured men and women to her father give a wider range of thought and desire to her already quick and brilliant imagination.

The boys who composed the first "Brotherhood" are now men, and are agreeable companions to their old benefactor. Many beautiful letters reach him from distant towns, and some from abroad, where he made many pleasant acquaintances. These letters are delightful reading. The writers ever and anon speak of their appreciation of certain good they had received at the hands of Mr. Ransom; how they had escaped the pitfalls of youth, and were led into purity, truth, and salvation.

But the crown of this well-ordered life! What is it? There is no craving for recognition in personal merit. It is not of good works as the foundation. Nay, it is rather his firm persuasion of Jesus' love, and the glorious prospect which opens up so thrillingly to his faith, of eternal blessedness in the bright hereafter. Grounded as that faith is upon the authentic and richly inspired Scriptures, he is permitted to rest to-day upon the good promise that "Even to hoar age I am thy God;" or that other golden word, "Lo, I am with you

always, even unto the end of the world." And can any one lay aught against a love-elected, faith-inspired child of God? None.

The merit of the crucified Saviour is the basis of hope, the source of faith, the groundwork of love. From such a pinnacle of privilege as this the works of God, as seen in nature, have been studied with comfort and instruction. Men, in his eyes, are not so selfish as many believe them to be, for age has but softened the bitterest asperities of life, and increased his charity for all. So, too, the "better country" draws near, and the outlook seems joyous, as with diligent though weary feet he treads the distance between the latest mile-stones.

THE END.

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